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***An Investigation into the Relationships  
among Experience, Teacher Cognition,  
Context, and Classroom Practice in EFL  
Grammar Teaching in Argentina***

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

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*To Leo*

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that the present thesis represents my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation, assignment, or report submitted to this University or to any other institution for a degree, diploma, or any other qualifications.

Hugo Santiago Sanchez

## **ABSTRACT**

Language teacher cognition has been an area of research interest for more than three decades, diversifying in recent years into a wide range of academic areas such as teacher development, initial teacher education, grammar teaching, literacy instruction, task-based learning, phonology, testing, technology, and classroom research. Much of this research, however, has been based in private language institutes or universities in developed countries, especially English-speaking ones, and has focused on identifying and describing individual teacher cognitions mostly in novice native-speaker practitioners. The present study aims to help redress this tendency by examining the cognitions and experiences, and the relationships among them, of two experienced non-native speaker teachers of English working at a state secondary school in Argentina.

Using multi-methods such as semi-structured interviews, autobiographical accounts, classroom observation, stimulated recall, teacher diaries, and a grammaticality judgement task, this research project explores the teachers' prior language learning experiences, knowledge about grammar, and grammar-related pedagogical knowledge in relation to their actual grammar teaching practices. In addition, there is a focus on the role which contextual factors play in shaping the application of these experiential and cognitive constructs, and on the interplay among these factors to help define the teachers' grammar pedagogical decisions and actions. The findings reveal that experiential and cognitive factors appear to account for the major differences between these teachers' teaching theories, practices, and rationales; whereas context-bound influences explain the similarities between their classroom instructional actions. They also show that language teacher cognition is informed by different sources (the teachers' personal and prior educational history, their professional education, and their accumulated experience) and that teachers construct a context, instantiated by the interaction between their language teacher cognition and the contextual factors inside and around the classroom, which mediates between their cognitions and practice. These results carry direct implications for those involved in teacher cognition, language teacher research, teacher education, and materials design.

## ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in the thesis:

<p><b>A-15:</b> Federal Agreement 15</p> <p><b>AA:</b> Autobiographical Account</p> <p><b>BA:</b> Bachelor of Arts</p> <p><b>CBC:</b> Basic Contents</p> <p><b>CCK:</b> Common Content Knowledge</p> <p><b>CFCyE:</b> Federal Council of Culture and Education</p> <p><b>CF[s]:</b> Contextual Factor[s]</p> <p><b>DA:</b> Document Analysis</p> <p><b>E:</b> Episode</p> <p><b>EFL:</b> English as a Foreign Language</p> <p><b>EGB:</b> Basic General Education</p> <p><b>ELT:</b> English Language Teaching</p> <p><b>ESL:</b> English as a Second Language</p> <p><b>FL:</b> Foreign Language</p> <p><b>GJT:</b> Grammaticality Judgement Task</p> <p><b>GRPK:</b> Grammar-related Pedagogical Knowledge</p> <p><b>I1:</b> First Interview</p> <p><b>I2:</b> Second Interview</p> <p><b>KAG:</b> Knowledge about Grammar</p> <p><b>KAL:</b> Knowledge about Language</p>	<p><b>L1:</b> First Language or Mother Tongue</p> <p><b>L2:</b> Second/Foreign Language</p> <p><b>LFE:</b> Federal Law of Education</p> <p><b>MA:</b> Master of Arts</p> <p><b>NS:</b> Native Speaker</p> <p><b>NNS:</b> Non-Native Speaker</p> <p><b>PCK:</b> Pedagogical Content Knowledge</p> <p><b>PGCE:</b> Post-graduate Certificate in Education</p> <p><b>PLLEs:</b> Prior Language Learning Experiences</p> <p><b>PPC:</b> Present Perfect Continuous</p> <p><b>PPS:</b> Present Perfect Simple</p> <p><b>SCK:</b> Specialized Content Knowledge</p> <p><b>SI:</b> Staff Interviews</p> <p><b>SR:</b> Stimulated Recall</p> <p><b>TD:</b> Teacher Diary</p> <p><b>[T]ESOL:</b> [Teaching] English to Speakers of Other Languages</p> <p><b>TLA:</b> Teacher Language Awareness</p> <p><b>TTC[s]:</b> Teacher Training Course[s]</p>
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## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

In the 1970s research on teaching was predominantly limited to observing teacher behaviour and actions and to determining how these correlated with successful learning outcomes. Forty years later, though research now caters for both the public and private domains of teaching, there are still traces of an interest in teacher effectiveness and in identifying the characteristics of 'good' practitioners which are then transmitted normatively to novices. The unfortunate consequence of this type of research is a simplistic and distorted view of what teaching actually entails and of detrimental transferences to classroom practices.

The focus of the present study is on exploring both the observable and the unobservable components of teaching, and on portraying and understanding teaching in its full complexity. In the field of second/foreign language (L2) teacher education, research to date on the psychological context of teaching has been concerned mostly with identifying and describing the elements of teacher knowledge base and, in a few cases, with examining their application in classroom practices. My research project investigates specifically experiential, cognitive, and contextual factors in relation to instructional grammar practices. Besides an interest in how each of these factors is realised in real grammar teaching, my study looks into the relationships among them and how their interaction may help define teachers' pedagogical decisions and actions.

Though research on language teacher experience and cognition has produced significant findings in the last three decades, the tendency has been for studying the cognitive systems of native-speaker (NS) practitioners teaching L2 to small groups of self-motivated learners at private institutions or universities in developed countries, especially English-speaking ones like the USA, the UK, Canada, and Australia. This means that further research is required in alternative contexts and on alternative participants if we expect findings to reflect wider global realities. The present study is expected to help address this gap by exploring the practices and rationale of non-native speaker (NNS) teachers of English working in monolingual (Spanish-speaking) English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes at a state secondary school in an under-researched region (Argentina, South America).

### **1.1 Aims and rationale**

I first developed my interest in grammar during primary and secondary education and then reinforced it on my initial EFL teacher training course (TTC), where I took four grammar courses: one in Spanish grammar, two in English grammar, and one in contrastive analysis. At the end of this metalinguistically rich experience at my TTC, I was expected to be able to teach grammar, among other L2 features, in my one-year teaching practice at primary and secondary schools. It was then when I realised that knowing grammar did not automatically enable me to make it comprehensible to different types of learners. As Nilsson (2008) points out, different knowledge bases such as subject matter and pedagogy are taught separately in teacher education programmes and it is usually the task of student teachers to bring them together by themselves and to transform knowledge into accessible forms for their students. Fortunately, my previous schooling experiences had involved massive exposure to a wide range of grammar teaching approaches and techniques, which I ended up replicating in my teaching practice, often unconsciously.

When I became a teacher trainer myself, I was in charge of two classes, one on language awareness and the other on methodology. This represented a great opportunity to integrate both areas and to help my students develop some knowledge which, though fundamental, was missing in my initial teacher training. It was not an easy task. My classes fluctuated from focusing mostly on language to dealing exclusively with pedagogy. In my quest for answers, when I was working on my MA (Masters of Arts) dissertation, I came across a research article (Borg, 1999b) which opened up a new perspective on the issue: teacher cognition. I then decided to do research on grammar teaching and teacher cognition, specifically on three aspects which had been crucial in my TTC both as a teacher trainee and then as a teacher educator: prior language learning experiences, knowledge about grammar, and grammar-related pedagogical knowledge.

When devising my research proposal, I searched for research on L2 grammar teaching and teacher cognition based in my country and abroad. Much to my surprise, I found nothing on language teacher cognition research in Argentina, and most of the articles and book chapters I read reflected realities which had little to do with my socio-cultural and educational context, let alone state education. In my attempt to redress this tendency by bringing to light

alternative EFL classroom realities, I decided to conduct my research in an under-explored institutional and regional context: a state secondary school in Argentina. In this particular educational setting, the context is believed to have a strong impact on teachers' practices. This led me to include contextual factors as a focus of my research and to examine the interplay between these and experiential and cognitive components in real EFL lessons. This would allow me not only to fill a research gap in this area but also to reflect teaching reality in its "irreducible complexity and difficulty" (Clark, 1986, cited in Borg, 2006: 15). The interest in experienced NNS teachers originated in the fact that these practitioners have also been largely neglected in the agenda of most researchers.

My research purpose was not to pass any judgement on how effective the teachers' decisions and actions were but on understanding and describing the rationale behind their practices in their particular context of occurrence. This defined the choice of an exploratory-interpretive paradigm, of a non-judgemental stance, and of a methodology which would allow me to adopt an insider's perspective of the aspects being explored, to understand teachers' rationale and interpretations, to construct meaning with them, and eventually to provide rich descriptive and interpretive data that could reflect and shed light on the inherent complexity of teaching. I invite you to read the rest of the story in the following two sections and in chapters two through eight.

## **1.2 Research questions**

The purpose of the present research project is to explore the relationships among experiential, cognitive, and contextual factors in relation to the grammar teaching practices of two qualified, experienced EFL teachers. The study intends to provide answers to the following research questions in relation to each case:

1. *How do the teachers approach grammar in their particular contexts? What are the distinguishing characteristics of their grammar teaching practices?*
2. *Are these practices associated with the teachers' prior language learning experiences (PLLEs), knowledge about grammar (KAG), and grammar-related pedagogical knowledge (GRPK)? If so, how?*
3. *What role do contextual factors (CFs) play in shaping these grammar teaching practices?*



Once these research questions have been addressed and drawing on the information provided in the description of each case, I will set out to explore two further issues:

- A. *Are these teachers' grammar teaching practices influenced by similar experiential (PLLEs), cognitive (KAG and GRPK), and contextual factors?*
- B. *How do PLLEs, KAG, GRPK, and CFs relate to help define teachers' grammar teaching practices?*

### **1.3 Overview of the thesis**

This thesis contains nine chapters. Following the Introduction, Chapter II provides a description of the educational and institutional background for this study. The first two sections present an overview of secondary school education in Argentina and of EFL secondary education in particular. The next two sections describe the institutional context where the project is carried out, Cortázar School (fictitious name), and EFL teaching at this school. The final section acknowledges the aspects which are atypical of the context studied. Chapter III reviews the literature on the experiential and cognitive factors under study. Section 3.2 outlines the main strands of research in relation to PLLEs. Section 3.3 examines previous research about subject matter knowledge, teachers' language awareness, and, finally, KAG. Section 3.4 introduces the notion of pedagogical content knowledge and then examines research works to date on GRPK. Chapter IV outlines the methodological rationale for this study including its methodological, ontological, and epistemological stances; its research tradition; aspects concerning validity and reliability; ethical considerations; and a full description of the methods used, the participants, and the data analysis procedures adopted. Chapters V and VI present the two cases under study. In each case, five aspects are extensively examined and described: the teacher's grammar teaching practices, PLLEs, KAG, GRPK, and the CFs interacting with these. Chapter VII provides a cross-case analysis of the two participants vis-à-vis the five aspects detailed in the previous chapter and discusses the relationships among experiential, cognitive, and contextual factors in the teachers' grammar teaching practices. Finally, Chapter VIII discusses the main contributions of the study, and Chapter IX outlines its implications and offers some recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER II EDUCATIONAL and INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND

This chapter describes the educational and institutional background of the study. It discusses the structural and curricular organisation of the school system in Argentina, especially Secondary School Education (section 2.1), and of Secondary School *EFL* Education in this country (section 2.2). It then moves on to describe Cortázar School (section 2.3), the EFL Education offered by this institution (section 2.4), and the atypicality of the context studied (section 2.5).

### 2.1 Secondary school education in Argentina

The school system in Argentina is organised into an obligatory nine-year primary school scheme and an optional three-year secondary school system. The former is called *Educación General Básica* (Basic General Education, EGB) consisting of 3 three-year cycles, referred to as EGB1 (1<sup>o</sup>, 2<sup>o</sup>, and 3<sup>o</sup> years), EGB2 (4<sup>o</sup>, 5<sup>o</sup>, and 6<sup>o</sup> years), and EGB3 (7<sup>o</sup>, 8<sup>o</sup>, and 9<sup>o</sup> years). The secondary school scheme is called *Polimodal* (Ley Federal de Educación 24.195, LFE - Federal Law of Education 24.195). **Table 1** shows the structure of this school organisation.

**Table 1:** Structure of primary and secondary school education in Argentina

AGE	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
YEAR of SCHOOLING	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	9 <sup>th</sup>	10 <sup>th</sup>	11 <sup>th</sup>	12 <sup>th</sup>
TYPE of EDUCATION (LFE)	Primary school ( <i>obligatory</i> )									<i>Polimodal</i> ( <i>optional</i> )		
	1 <sup>st</sup> Cycle			2 <sup>nd</sup> Cycle			3 <sup>rd</sup> Cycle			1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>

At a curricular level, this education system includes standardised training during EGB and more specialised training during *Polimodal*, where the students are required to choose from the following academic orientations: Natural Sciences; Economy and Management; Humanities and Social Sciences; Goods and Services Production; and Communication, Arts and Design (Consejo Federal de Cultura y Educación, CFCyE - Federal Council of Culture and Education, 1998b). Armendáriz et al. explain the rationale behind this academic-oriented cycle:

Polymodal [sic] Education attempts to capture the multiple alternatives the modern world offers in the different areas of knowledge. Education is seen as assuming a guiding role that will enable students to broaden their experiences and have access to new ones, making it easier in the future for them to take decisions associated to life projects or their insertion in the working world (1998: 5).

The curricular structure of *Polimodal* education is divided into 3 (three) sections: 1- *Curricular Areas common to all the orientations* (Spanish Language and Literature, Foreign Languages, Mathematics, Ethics and Democratic Education, Physical Education, Natural Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences, Technology, Arts and Communication), which provide standardised training regardless of the academic orientation selected; 2- *Curricular Areas specific to each orientation*, which are mainly aimed at helping the learners to acquire specialised knowledge and instrumental skills based on the orientation selected; and 3- *Curricular Areas specific to each institution*, which focus on the requirements and needs of the learners in their particular institutional context. Each subject within each curricular area is assigned no less than 72 clock hours per year, i.e. 2 clock hours per week.

To allow the curricular organisation of an integrated education system, the LFE introduces the *Contenidos Básicos Comunes* (Basic Contents, CBC) for all the cycles of the primary and secondary school systems. These documents are curricular guidelines which describe the minimum contents (conceptual, procedural and attitudinal) for each curricular subject which every school in Argentina has to include in their institutional curriculum and class syllabi.

## **2.2 Secondary school EFL education in Argentina**

The teaching of Foreign Languages (FL) is compulsory as from 4<sup>th</sup> Year of EGB2 until *Polimodal* inclusive (age range 9-17). Federal Agreement 15 'On Language Teaching' (A-15) states that FL instruction is divided into levels, each level representing a three-year acquisition or learning unit. **Table 2** shows the different structural alternatives each school jurisdiction can select from regarding FL instruction.

**Table 2:** Alternatives for the teaching of foreign languages  
(A-15 - CFCyE, 1998a)

Cycle	Alternative A	Alternative B	Alternative C
<i>EGB 2</i>	<i>English</i> (level I)	<i>English</i> (level I)	<i>English</i> (level I)
<i>EGB 3</i>	<i>English</i> (level II)	<i>English</i> (level II)	<i>Another FL</i> (level I)
<i>Polimodal</i>	<i>English</i> (level III)	<i>Another FL</i> (level I)	<i>Another FL</i> (level II)

According to A-15, schools are required to provide no less than 9 (nine) years of FL instruction, at least 3 (three) years of which must be devoted to the teaching of English (Armendáriz et al., 1999). The jurisdiction of Buenos Aires Province, where the present research project is carried out, selected **Alternative A** for all primary and secondary schools, thus ensuring that by the end of *Polimodal* all students have received 9 years of EFL instruction.

At a curricular level, the CBC for Foreign Languages (*EGB* and *Polimodal*) are organised into 5 (five) sections: 1- Spoken Language, 2- Written Language, 3- Literary Discourse, 4- Procedural Contents for the Comprehension and Production of Spoken and Written Texts, and 5- Attitudinal Contents (CFCyE, 1997). In the case of *Polimodal*, in addition to the CBC, there are specifications about the lexical areas and discourse formats specific to each academic orientation (CFCyE, 1998b). Official documents favour a task-based approach to language learning in which there is a focus on the process, language is seen as a vehicle to perform an authentic task, and language is not graded but dealt with as a whole (CFCyE, 1996). However, though in their curricula all schools describe their FL methodology and contents following the official guidelines, contents “[are] defined (in reality) on the basis of the latest/favourite textbook chosen by the head of department” (Armendáriz et al., 1999: 22). As will be seen in 2.4, Cortázar School is no exception and EFL instruction is markedly book-based.

### 2.3 Cortázar School

Cortázar School is one of the few state university schools in Argentina. As opposed to other state schools, university schools are dependent on an autonomous state national university and base their institutional structure and curriculum on directives which they receive from their own universities and which, naturally, cannot contradict the specifications in federal documents passed by the National Ministry of Education. Yet the headteacher at Cortázar School claims

their decisions about the school structure and curricular content have also been based on guidelines from the Ministry of Education in Buenos Aires Province since this allows for student mobility and school leaving accreditation (2007, personal communication, 12/2007). In addition, university schools are different from other state schools in that, among other aspects: all their teachers are highly qualified; they have heads of department for different curricular areas; their students are selected on the basis of their performance in competitive entrance examinations; the number of teaching hours is higher than that in other state schools; the curricular content is always more advanced than that included in the CBC and in the curriculum of other state schools; in FL classes, students are often grouped according to their FL level of competence; and, when they graduate, those students willing to pursue undergraduate studies at the university on which their schools depend are not required to sit for entrance examinations and are admitted directly into their undergraduate courses.

The current school curriculum at Cortázar School (Proyecto Educativo Institucional - Institutional Educational Project), describing the school's structural organisation and curricular content, is fully based on the specifications proposed by the LFE 24.195 and other official documents passed during the implementation of this law. This university school is a coeducational institution providing education at EGB3 and *Polimodal* levels. The learners' age range is between 12 and 17. In *Polimodal*, this university school offers three orientations: *Humanities and Social Sciences*; *Natural Sciences*; and *Communication, Arts and Design*. The CBC and other official documents have been considered for the selection of curricular content and, in the case of *Polimodal*, the institutional curriculum includes the 3 (three) types of content specified above: curricular areas common to all the orientations, curricular areas specific to each orientation, and curricular areas specific to Cortázar School. The latter curricular areas consist of institutional workshops and projects such as theme-related working days (e.g., Youth Arts Annual Meeting), school trips (these often take more than a week), and camping trips. As will be seen in 5.5 and 6.5, these school activities constitute important contextual factors which account for a great percentage of student absenteeism in EFL classes and which, therefore, have a strong impact on EFL teaching practices.

## 2.4 ELT education at Cortázar School

As in all Argentine schools, FL instruction is compulsory in EGB3 at Cortázar School and has transversal status in all the *Polimodal* orientations offered by this institution. Like all state schools under the jurisdiction of Buenos Aires province, Cortázar School has selected English as the only FL taught in all the cycles (6 years in all). Yet there are some key differences between EFL instruction at this university school and that in other state schools: 1- Cortázar School provides 96 hours of EFL tuition annually, as opposed to 72 offered by other state schools; 2- EFL back-up courses and other workshops are taught weekly each semester; 3- learners are grouped into levels of English language proficiency; 4- there are no more than 20 students per class, as opposed to 35-40 in other state schools; and 5- all EFL teachers at Cortázar School are fully qualified (some are EFL teacher trainers at university) and they have been selected through public tenure exams.

As regards curricular content, the school curriculum lists conceptual and procedural EFL contents for both EGB3 and *Polimodal* following the guidelines in the CBC and other official documents. Whereas EGB3 students are said to receive training in general English, *Polimodal* learners are provided with EFL instruction which is specific to the orientations they have opted for. In reality, however, EFL instruction is based on a textbook series all EFL members of staff select and the students receive instruction in general English in all the six levels they are required to pass.

At a contextual level, the budgetary restrictions which most state institutions in Argentina are subject to (Zappa-Hollman, 2007) are evident in the basic building facilities and materials resources available at Cortázar School. Even though this school, unlike most state secondary schools, has an EFL department and separate EFL classrooms, these rooms are too small to accommodate the number of students in each class and for the teachers to move around, and lack a subject-related appearance which might differentiate them from other classrooms in the school. They are also ill-equipped, containing old desks and chairs, a small blackboard, a storage cabinet, no TV or VCR/DVD sets, and only one CD player which has to be shared by all the teachers from the department. Whenever teachers want to use video, they have to book a video room next to the library, which is common to all the departments. Regarding ELT resources, each classroom stores English monolingual and English-Spanish

dictionaries, abridged novels and short stories, and a set of the textbook materials (a student's book, a language powerbook, a teacher's book, and audio cassettes), most of which have been donated by publishers. The students are expected to buy their own study materials (textbook and worksheets), either the original books or the photocopies.

### **2.5 Atypicality of the context studied**

As described in 2.3 and 2.4, some characteristics of Cortázar School (e.g., university school providing more teaching hours and more advanced curricular contents), EFL instruction (e.g., relatively small classes with learners grouped into levels of EFL competence), and the teacher participants (e.g., teacher trainers with subject-specific qualifications and extensive teaching experience; see 4.4.2 and 4.4.3) render the context studied atypical of other state institutional contexts and practitioners in Argentina and, possibly, around the world. In addition, I must acknowledge that I have a connection with the teachers studied (both were teacher trainers in my TTC; see 9.2) and with the research site (the school is attached to the university where I trained as an EFL teacher). Even though my intention was not to select cases and contexts which were representative of all Argentine state secondary school teachers and settings (see 4.4.1) or which I was not related to in any way, I am fully aware that my familiarity with the research site and participants may have influenced my perception and understanding of the teaching practices observed (see 9.2) and that the atypicality of the context studied may affect the index of transferability which the reader may make of the findings reported in this study to other state secondary school settings. Yet these facts do not invalidate the necessity to explore institutions like Cortázar School since, in addition to being subject to similar conditions as other state schools (e.g., budgetary restrictions, basic building facilities, limited resources, and strikes), they still remain under-researched educational and institutional contexts, especially in relation to foreign language teacher education and cognition.

### **2.6 Conclusion**

Chapter II describes the most relevant aspects of the educational and institutional context in which the grammar teaching practices to be examined are embedded. An understanding of this contextual background will help us interpret

not only the classroom practices to be observed but also the rationale that teachers provide for their pedagogical decisions and actions. The following chapter discusses the research done on the experiential and cognitive factors to be explored in this study.

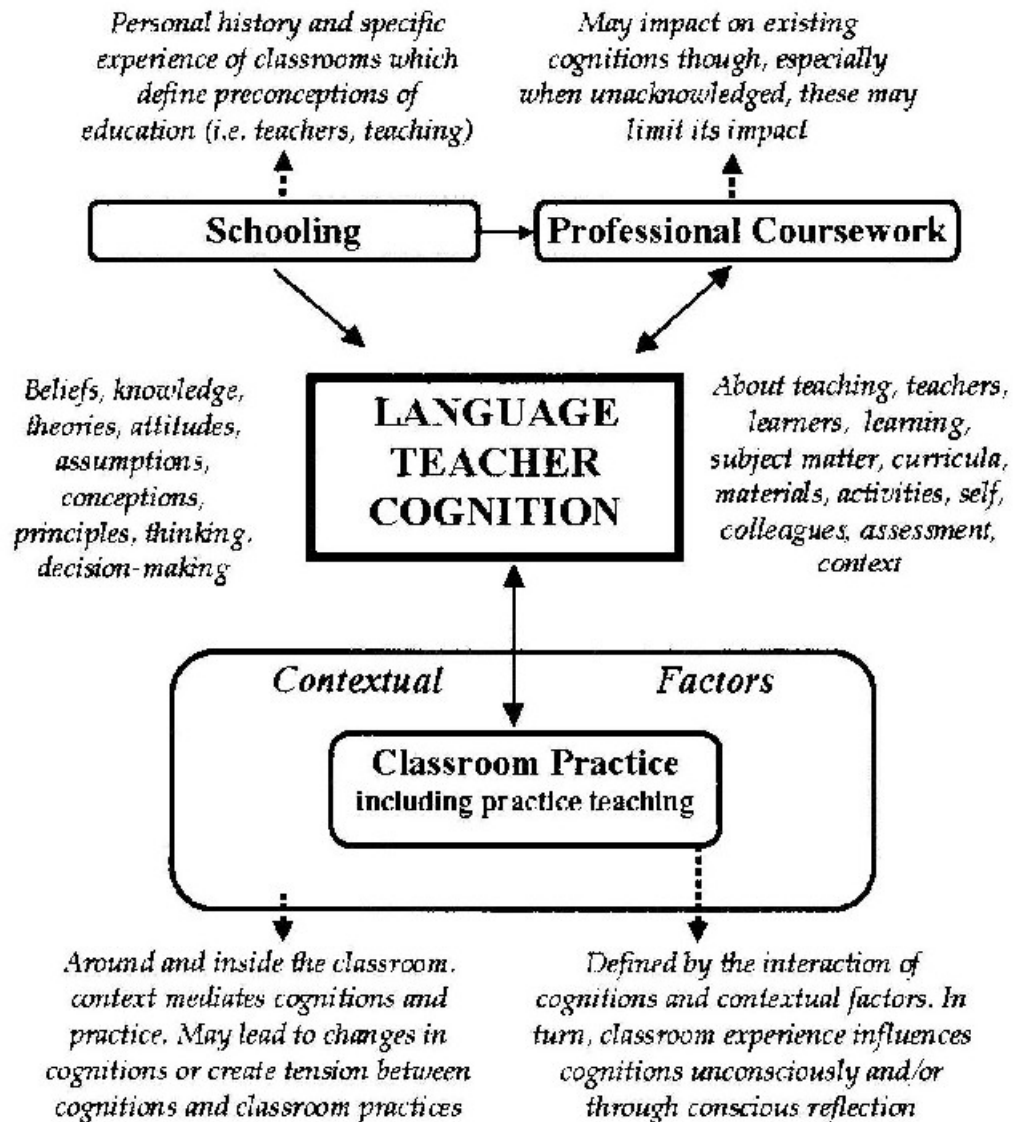


## CHAPTER III LITERATURE REVIEW

### 3.1 Introduction

Beginning in the late 1960s, research interest in *teacher cognition* has resulted in hundreds of individual studies which have aimed to throw light on the psychological bases of teachers' professional practice. In addition to significant insights into teachers' mental lives, research on teacher cognition has led to a proliferation of terminology and to a subsequent conceptual confusion since many terms have been used to define similar concepts or similar labels have been used to describe different concepts (Borg, 2003a, 2006; Clandinin and Connelly, 1987; Eisenhart et al., 1988). In my research project, language teacher cognition is used as "an inclusive term referring to the complex, practically-oriented, personalized, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts and beliefs that language teachers draw on in their work" (Borg, 2006: 272). Borg casts further light on the nature of teacher cognition by providing a tool (Figure 1) which depicts the elements and processes in language teacher cognition and, thus, which conceptualises the field of language teacher research and its complexity. This figure summarises the present state of language teacher cognition research and is reviewed at the end of this study (section 7.2).

The current chapter explores the experiential and cognitive factors which are the focus of this study [PLLEs (section 3.2), KAG (section 3.3), and GRPK (section 3.4)] and grammar teaching practices and pedagogical knowledge (section 3.5). Though CFs represent a fourth focus, they are examined principally as they influence the application of the aforesaid experiential and cognitive aspects. Therefore, they are not reviewed in a separate section but where appropriate within sections 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, and 3.5. This exploration is intended to provide the conceptual basis for the research to be done in the current research project.

**Figure 1:** Nature of language teacher cognition (Borg, 2006: 283)

### 3.2 Teacher cognition and PLLEs

One of the aspects the present study intends to explore is the influence of teachers' PLLEs upon their grammar teaching practices. In this research project, PLLEs is used to refer to the teachers' educational history as L2 learners before their teacher education courses.

An interest in teachers' prior learning experiences dates back to 1975, when Lortie introduced the notion of 'apprenticeship of observation' to refer to teachers' early school experiences. This notion emphasises the fact that, before their teacher training experiences, teachers have spent thousands of hours in classrooms as students, during which time they have internalised the teaching

models and teacher behaviour they have been exposed to. These early experiences mould teachers' teaching philosophies and form their pre-training beliefs, which are said to be resistant to change (Holt-Reynolds, 1992; Johnson, 1994; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992) and which are believed to filter the information teacher trainees are introduced to in teacher education courses (e.g., Hollingsworth, 1988 in Carter, 1990; Pennington, 1996; Richards, 1998; Tillema, 1994). Kennedy claims: "Teachers acquire seemingly indelible imprints from their own experiences as students and these imprints are tremendously difficult to shake" (Kennedy, 1990: 17, cited in Bailey et al., 1996).

Since the introduction of the concept of 'apprenticeship of observation', numerous studies exploring teachers' mental lives have reported findings in relation to teachers' PLLEs. Each of these studies has added to our knowledge of the conceptualisation which teachers, especially pre-service and novice ones, make of their profession based on their PLLEs. However, the diverse nature of their research foci, methodology, and context of study makes it difficult to identify clear-cut commonalities in the contributions they have made to our understanding of PLLEs. The following sub-sections represent an attempt to arrange these studies on the basis of similar findings about the impact of PLLEs on teachers' conceptualisation of L2 teaching and, therefore, to impose some coherence on the study of these experiences.

### **3.2.1 PLLEs and mental images**

PLLEs and the "seemingly indelible imprints" which teachers attain from them (ibid.) have been studied in a variety of ways, including the analysis of *mental images* which teachers recall from critical episodes and particular people in their schooling experiences. In educational research, mental images have been defined as "general metaphors for thinking about teaching", "overall concept[s] that teachers have of a lesson", and "memorised snapshots [of particular pupils or incidents]" (Calderhead and Robson, 1991: 3). Though images rooted in PLLEs represent a one-sided student's view of language teaching (Johnson, 1994), they are said to help inexperienced teachers make sense of classroom information and to highly determine their teaching profiles and classroom practices (Lortie, 1975). Their relevance also lies in the fact that they make pre-training knowledge about teaching accessible to analysis.

Teacher trainees are thought to bring with them both positive and negative images of teaching, from which they create stereotypes of good and bad teaching respectively. Some of these images are “episodic memories” of specific critical incidents or people, whereas others are more general, derived from a range of teaching experiences (Calderhead and Robson, 1991: 4). In a study examining the knowledge of teaching and learning that 12 student teachers had on entry to primary school teacher training, Calderhead and Robson found that these trainees made decisions about the type of teacher they wanted to be and the kind of situations they wanted to foster or avoid based on positive and negative images they had created during their early school experiences. The authors added that the students’ model of good teaching was reinforced when their positive images of school teachers bore some resemblance to their own personality traits.

Calderhead and Robson (1991) unveiled some relationship between the student teachers’ prior learning experiences and their pre-training knowledge of teaching and learning. However, given that the participants were in their first year of a Bachelor of Education course, the findings were based entirely on interview data and on the assumptions the trainees made about teaching, without considering the trainees’ own classroom practice. This allows us to explore the nature of their apprenticeship of observation but not the impact which this may have on their teaching practices, which is one of the foci of the present study.

More relevant to my research project is Johnson (1994), not only because it examines previous *language* learning experiences in particular but because it contemplates classroom practice and uses similar data collection procedures (journals, observations, post-observation interviews, and stimulated recall). Johnson explored the emerging beliefs about L2 teachers and L2 teaching and the instructional practices of four inexperienced English as a second language (ESL) teacher trainees during a 15-week practicum. The study revealed that the trainees’ images of formal language learning experiences exerted a profound impact on their beliefs about L2 teachers and L2 teaching. The four participants held strong images of their L2 educators, and the classroom organisation, dynamics, curricular materials, and instructional activities they had been exposed to. These images, especially the negative ones, were sometimes in marked contrast to the trainees’ perceptions of themselves as L2 teachers and of their own instructional practices. Conflicting images emerged, therefore, between the

type of teaching they wanted to provide and the teaching methodologies they had observed in their PLLEs. Though they were aware of the inadequacies of some of their images from PLLEs, these student teachers were often unable to teach according to their projected image of teaching and ended up acting out prior images of teaching, which suggests that they could not move beyond their apprenticeship of observation and that pre-training beliefs are difficult to alter. This is reflected in the following comment made by one of the teachers:

It's been really frustrating to watch myself do the old behaviors and not to know how to 'fix it' at the time. I know now that I don't want to teach like this. I don't want to be this kind of teacher, but I don't have any other experiences. It's like I just fall into the trap of teaching like I was taught and I don't know how to get myself out of that mode. I think I still need more role models of how to do this, but it's up to me to really strive to *apply* what I believe in when I'm actually teaching (p. 446; emphasis in original)

Johnson claims that, to avoid replicating unwanted prior teaching practices and to be able to operationalise their projected images of themselves as L2 teachers and of L2 teaching, trainees need more exposure to alternative images of teachers and teaching which might act as a model of action. Johnson also argues that the problem lies in the fact that simply observing new role models appears to be insufficient to change our pre-training beliefs and current teaching practices since prior images not only direct teaching but also shape our perceptions of new instructional practices. Pajares explains that:

... the earlier a belief is incorporated into the belief structure, the more difficult it is to alter, for these beliefs subsequently affect perception and strongly influence the processing of information. It is for this that newly acquired beliefs are most vulnerable (Pajares, 1992: 317)

Johnson concludes that "if preservice teachers' beliefs are to shift at all, they must become cognizant of their own beliefs, have opportunities to resolve conflicting images within their own belief systems, have access to, develop an understanding of and, more importantly, have successful encounters with alternative instructional practices and alternative images of teachers" (p. 451). She adds that L2 teacher education programmes must encourage trainees to test out alternative models (both to observe and to experience them) in a practicum

environment which is conducive to and supportive of this experimentation. The relationship between PLLEs and TTCs is explored in more detail in 3.2.4.

It is appropriate to highlight that, unlike Calderhead and Robson (1991) and Johnson (1994), which centred on the study of inexperienced pre-service teachers, my study examines experienced EFL educators who have most probably gained significant teaching experience and have tested out more alternative teaching practices than just those they observed in their PLLEs. If such were the case, it appears interesting to explore whether their PLLEs still exert some impact on their teaching practices.

### **3.2.2 PLLEs and the transfer of teaching methods and techniques**

Reference has been made above to the fact that, when asked about their L2 learning history, teachers are likely to recall positive and/or negative memories of L2 teachers and L2 teaching incidents. Likewise, they hold positive and/or negative recollections of the methods and techniques which were used during their PLLEs. In cases where there is transfer (or lack thereof) from PLLEs to current teaching practices, the rule of thumb seems to be that teachers tend to replicate those teaching approaches and strategies which they found effective or positive as L2 learners and to reject those which are associated with negative experiences. As was observed in Johnson (1994), this rejection does not automatically result in developing alternative teaching practices since teachers may slip back into ways of teaching which they reject.

Within the field of L2 education, several studies report on the impact of teachers' negative or positive PLLEs on their decisions to adopt certain instructional strategies in their own L2 teaching contexts. Numrich (1996) found that the two most frequently cited techniques which teachers were motivated to replicate in their teaching practices because of their positive PLLEs were "integrating culture" and "giving students a need to communicate" (p. 138). On the other hand, the ones which they associated with negative PLLEs and which they, therefore, rejected were "correcting errors" and "teaching grammar" (p. 139). A similar experience and effect in relation to error correction is reported by an in-service ESL teacher in Golombek (1998) whilst she is describing a tension which emerged when she intended to develop both her learners' fluency and their accuracy. The teacher was afraid of overcorrecting and thus embarrassing her students while doing simultaneous monitoring, since this would have a negative

effect on their affective side and their oral performance. This teacher thought this fear derived from her PLLEs while studying Russian as an L2. Golombek then concludes that this teacher's "recounting of this experience points to the affective nature of her personal practical knowledge (her fear of being corrected), its moral nature (how she would like to be treated and how she should treat others), and its consequential nature (how her behaviour might silence students)" (p. 454). This conclusion serves to show how teachers' PLLEs can give shape to their personal practical knowledge and, eventually, to their teaching practices.

In Warford and Reeves (2003), two of the three NNS teachers in the study, though they praised the communicative teaching approaches they were introduced to in their TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) training programme in the USA, could not envision themselves teaching in any other way but using the grammar-based teaching models they had observed in their PLLEs. Exploring the preconceptions about English Language Teaching (ELT) of both NS and NNS teachers, Warford and Reeves claimed that "evidence of this phenomenon was more prevalent among non-native speakers" and that "in visualizing themselves in the role of teachers, the three NNS appeared more likely to have access to their own language learning experiences than their native-speaking counterparts, several of whom had particular difficulty remembering their language learning experiences in significant detail" (p. 57). Though this observation appears to be interesting, it seems inappropriate to presume that the mere condition of being a NS or a NNS determines our capacity to access our PLLEs. First, people are more apt to evoke memories when these are retrieved in a meaningful context. This may be the case of NNS student teachers remembering their L2 learning experiences in the country where that L2 is officially spoken. Second, many native speakers training to become ESL teachers have limited or no prior L2 learning experiences and many of them consider their first language (L1) learning experiences irrelevant to their L2 teacher training programme. This may well be the reason why NS trainees might not access their PLLEs. Third, it might also be that NNS teachers in Warford and Reeves' study are drawing on their direct experience of learning *English*, while NS trainees may be reflecting on learning other foreign languages. Thus, the latter's experience is less directly involved with what they are now learning to teach. Finally, though the focus of the studies in this section and my own research is largely on prior *language* learning experiences, we cannot disregard

any other schooling experiences which might bear some relevance to L2 teachers' instructional practices.

In Hayes (2005), the three participants interviewed (experienced NNS teachers) claimed they used instructional techniques, such as reading aloud, which their own role model L2 teachers had employed. Hayes suggests that this transfer may be due to "the lack of training prior to initial appointment as a teacher which was common at the time [in Sri Lanka]" (p. 182). This echoes the idea in the previous section that novice teachers tend to replicate techniques derived from their PLLEs because they have not been exposed to alternative instructional practices (Johnson, 1994). In another study where he describes the life of Sudarat, an experienced Thai teacher of English, Hayes reports on the transfer of teaching methods from positive PLLEs (Hayes, 2009a). Unlike most other classroom realities where traditional methods were used by Thai teachers, Sudarat's classes were taught by American and British educators who promoted skills development and implicit grammar learning. What is worth noting about this case is that when Sudarat began teaching, despite the strong opposition she faced from senior colleagues (some of whom were her former teachers) who still favoured traditional EFL methods, she persisted in adopting a more student-centred methodology which was in line with that used during her PLLEs. Her loyalty to her prior beliefs and principles is even more salient if one considers that she started teaching in the school where she had studied and, according to the social conventions in Thailand, former students are expected to continue paying respect to their teachers, which involves outwardly conforming to their teaching philosophies and practices, whether they happen to share these or not.

Borg, M. (2005) reveals that the formation of a CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults) student teacher's pre-course beliefs was influenced mostly by her negative early school experiences. An example of this is the trainee's belief in an anti-didactic, student-centred teaching methodology, which was formed as a reaction to her experience in teacher-centred classrooms characterised by boring teacher-fronted lecturing. Also rooted in her positive and negative PLLEs with schoolteachers were her beliefs about L2 teachers. The trainee believed teachers should be positive, patient, empathetic, and respectful towards students; use humour; make their lessons appealing; and create a relaxed, comfortable, and non-judgemental classroom atmosphere. Despite her stated beliefs, in her early teaching practices this student teacher resorted to the



default teaching models provided by her prior school experiences. For instance, she tended to lecture the learners and to provide negative feedback to their responses. Borg claims, however, that by the end of the course she was able “to bring her beliefs into line with her practice and successfully moved from ‘lecturing’ to a student-focused lesson with maximum student involvement” (p. 24). Unlike the participants in Johnson (1994), who reverted to the negative teaching style present in their PLLEs, the student teacher in Borg’s study eventually managed to break free from her negative PLLEs. This development which the trainee seems to have experienced may be due to the fact that, during the course, the trainee observed and tried alternative teaching practices which were congruent with her teaching beliefs, as is revealed by the trainee on several occasions (p. 9). Yet, given the brevity of the training course and Borg’s study (4 weeks), it is hard to assert that, despite her strongly held beliefs about L2 teaching and learning, the trainee will not revert in the future to the teaching models she was exposed to in her PLLEs.

In Zeng and Murphy (2007), though the six experienced NNS teachers participating in the study favoured the adoption of a language teaching approach which focused on authentic communication, four of them highlighted the importance of using didactic materials and tasks such as drills, grammar-based activities, and translation. Not surprisingly, the four teachers had been exposed to “didactic language learning” as L2 students (pp. 13-14) and acknowledged the contribution this had made to boosting their confidence in EFL learning and to developing a solid L2 foundation. The teachers’ beliefs in a communication-based language teaching approach were also rooted in their PLLEs, when they remembered that their solely language-focused lessons had failed to help them develop speaking, listening, and communication skills.

As regards grammar teaching in particular, in Pahissa and Tragant (2009), three experienced NNS teachers (Emma, Joel, and Miquel) reported using grammar teaching methods which were congruent with those adopted in their PLLEs. Emma made use of explicit grammar teaching, translation, and terminology because these had helped her as an L2 learner. Joel adopted an anti-grammar stance (kept grammar teaching to a minimum and made no use of terminology) derived from his grammar-free French classes at school and his content-based English lessons at university. Like Emma, Joel used translation because he had found it useful as a learner as well. Finally, Miquel, though he

had positive recollections both of grammar-focused lessons with a NNS teacher and of the communicative methods used by a NS teacher, felt he more easily identified with the former and, thus, assigned grammar teaching (analysis of structures, terminology, and L1 comparison) an essential role in his classes. It seems appropriate to point out that two different studies focusing on NNS teachers (Pahissa and Tragant, 2009; Zeng and Murphy, 2007) and different participants in each study report on the transfer and wide use of translation (or L1-L2 comparison) in their FL classrooms. This adds to the literature which claims that this teaching technique is more frequently used by NNS teachers than by NS educators (Árva and Medgyes, 2000; Medgyes, 1994; Reves and Medgyes, 1994), especially when the former work in monolingual contexts. It will be interesting to observe if this is the case of the participants in my study, who are also NNS teachers working in monolingual contexts. Finally, Pahissa and Tragant (2009) show that the teachers in their study were motivated to teach grammar and use specific teaching techniques (e.g., L1-FL comparison and structure analysis in the case of Emma and Miquel) by the prospect of the *selectivitat* exam, which the students take at the end of secondary school to be admitted to university. This might indicate that decisions to use some strategies or methods may derive from more than simply experiential factors (e.g., contextual and cognitive aspects). Exploring the relationship among a variety of factors (PLLEs, KAG, GRPK, and CFs) is precisely the focus of the present study.

All in all, the work reviewed here indicates that the transfer of techniques and methods used in PLLEs is commonplace among both experienced and inexperienced teachers from a variety of teaching contexts. NNS practitioners in particular have been claimed to have more access to their PLLEs than their NS counterparts (further evidence in Borg, S., 2005 in 3.4.2). Teachers have also been observed to relate the transfer of techniques or lack thereof to prior positive or negative experiences respectively, though there is also evidence that some negative transfers are made against teachers' will (Borg, M., 2005; Johnson, 1994). Finally, the transfers reported above appear to have been made exclusively from prior *language* learning experiences and not from other schooling experiences. Further insight is needed about how exposure to prior teaching models in other subjects, say maths and arts, may relate to current L2 teaching practices.

Some final comments are worth making about methodological issues in the work reported thus far. First, most of the studies in this section (Hayes, 2005, 2009a; Numrich, 1996; Pahissa and Tragant, 2009; Warford and Reeves, 2003; and Zeng and Murphy, 2007) do not involve class observation and the findings are based entirely on teachers' accounts, which may not necessarily coincide with what actually occurs in the classroom. This methodology makes it impossible to examine the *impact* which teachers' PLLEs may have on their teaching practices, the *context* in which transfers from these experiences are made, and the *rationale* behind teachers' decisions to use certain teaching strategies. There is evidence, however, of the effectiveness of a variety of methods to explore the *nature*, not the influence, of teachers' PLLEs and pre-service beliefs (e.g., 'language learning history' accounts, in-depth interviews, and writing conferences combined with 'prompted' interviews). Second, the focus has been predominantly on the PLLEs of NS teachers with little or no teaching experience. We seem to have, therefore, minimal insight into the nature and influence of experienced NNS teachers' PLLEs. All this information appears to be highly relevant to my study to understand the methodological gap which it intends to fill by including class observation and stimulated recall and by examining a largely under-researched group.

### 3.2.3 PLLEs and subject matter knowledge

PLLEs have also been examined in relation to the subject matter knowledge which participants may have acquired during these experiences. The nature of this knowledge and the perception which teachers have of it appear to play a key role in determining the focus of their teaching practices and the language approach and instructional techniques which they decide to adopt.

Centring on the role of teacher metalinguistic awareness in L2 language teaching and its impact on the input made available for learning, Andrews (1999b) reports on the influence that PLLEs may have had on two secondary school EFL NNS teachers' attitude and approach towards grammar teaching. One of the teachers had studied secondary school mainly through the medium of English and had developed a sound *implicit* knowledge of grammar, which was reflected in her fluency and confidence as an oral and written language user. Yet she lacked confidence in her explicit knowledge of grammar, which she attributed to her receiving little or no explicit instruction on grammar at school. Possibly as a

reaction to this experience and in order to help learners develop grammatical competence, this teacher favoured and actually adopted what she called a 'traditional' approach to grammar teaching, which was deductive and form-focused and dependant on a textbook and worksheets and on the completion of standardised exercises. Moreover, this teacher's PLLEs and the resulting 'limitations' of her explicit language awareness had a strong impact on her teaching practices since she apparently did not perceive, and thus failed to filter, the inadequacies of the input the learners were exposed to in the curricular materials. The second teacher, though also having attended an English-medium secondary school, had experienced very traditional and grammar-focused English lessons. Despite acknowledging that these classes had been boring, he claimed that they had worked for him, which was reflected in his "possessing a relaxed ease with the language which [carried] over into his classroom teaching" and in his confidence when making "direct use of learner output as a major source of input into his grammar teaching" (pp. 172-173). In addition, this experience had influenced his approach to grammar teaching since not only did he recognise the importance of grammar teaching but also, unlike the boring lessons he had observed, he had developed an approach which "engaged his students' interest and attention" (p. 173). It is worth noting that none of these teachers had received full professional training yet. Therefore, the nature and perception of their current metalinguistic awareness was attributed to the subject matter knowledge they had developed during secondary school experiences. This may not be necessarily the case of ELT educators who receive linguistic training as part of their teacher education programmes.

Though in relation to the experiences and practices of *NS* teachers, Reeves (2009) also reports on the influence of the type of knowledge about language gained during PLLEs (both L1 and L2) upon teachers' language teaching practices. The two ESOL student teachers in Reeves' study (Sean and Rita) possessed a largely spontaneous (or implicit) knowledge of English and limited L2 learning experiences. During their TTC, they took a course on linguistics for classroom teachers in general but not on English linguistics for ESOL teachers in particular. Their scant explicit knowledge about language, especially English, shaped their attitude towards explicit language instruction and made them experience "moments of dissonance in their ESOL teaching" (p. 120). Focusing on content-based teaching (language arts and literature) and the

development of speaking and writing, Sean regarded the study of grammar uninteresting and restricted it to occasional mini-lessons in the form of error remedial work. He was observed to offer “cursory” grammar explanations and “incomplete and potentially problematic” grammar rules and to urge learners to assess whether statements “sounded right” to them (pp. 116-117). Rita tended to avoid grammar teaching and explanations but was expected to include some focus on them as part of the teacher education programme she was engaged in. She was observed to have insufficient explicit knowledge about English grammar when she failed to elicit adjectives from the students or to provide an explanation of adjectival construction. In her conclusion, Reeves expresses the need for “biographically responsive teacher education programs” which “build teaching and learning experiences around [the particular] assets and limitations” that trainees bring to these courses (p. 123). The need for more tailor-made ELT programmes appears to be a concern in the context of EFL teacher education courses in Argentina as well, as expressed by Armendáriz from the Argentine Ministry of Education (Armendáriz, interview, 12/2007).

Exploring the role of grammatical terminology in the practices of four qualified NS EFL teachers, Borg (1999a) found that the practices of three participants (Martha, Eric, Hanna) had been influenced by their PLLEs. Martha had experienced what she called an ‘anti-grammar’ system during her L1 education and, as a result, had not developed metalinguistic awareness of English. By contrast, her L2 education did include a focus on grammar instruction but, though representing a metalinguistically rich experience, it had created negative feelings in this teacher since it had failed to help her develop communicative competence in the target language. Her L1 and L2 experiences, along with the communicative-oriented teacher training programme she had completed and her subsequent difficulties with handling English grammar, had apparently influenced her decision not to promote the use of grammatical terminology in her EFL classes. The second teacher, Eric, had studied his L2 through the grammar-translation method but had been trained as a teacher to use communicative approaches which disfavoured grammar instruction and, naturally, the use of grammatical labels. Although at the beginning of his teaching career his methodology was purely communicative and grammar-free, Eric claimed he was now willing to re-examine and incorporate some aspects of the traditional methods he had experienced as an L2 learner, which included the use

of grammatical terminology and traditional activities (see Borg, 1998a in 3.5). Finally, the third teacher, Hanna, was reluctant to use grammatical terminology despite the fact that she felt confident in her knowledge of grammar and grammatical terms. As in the case of Martha, her negative feelings towards the use of grammatical labels had been caused by her metalinguistically rich yet communicatively unrewarding grammar-based PLLEs. Besides, like Eric, Hanna had been trained to adopt communicative approaches and to neglect the grammar-based L2 models she had been exposed to. A couple of points are worth highlighting with respect to these findings. First, teachers' decision to adopt or avoid certain instructional strategies (in this case, promoting the use of grammatical terminology) appears not to depend exclusively on their knowledge of and confidence in the linguistic aspect in question, but also on the type of experience, positive or negative, with which they associate the development of such knowledge (see, for example, Martha and Hanna's metalinguistically rich yet communicatively unrewarding grammar-based PLLEs). Second, unlike most previous studies on PLLEs which focused on pre-service or novice teachers, Borg (1999a) includes the cases of experienced teachers (e.g., Eric) and discusses, though incidentally, the impact of PLLEs on these teachers' teaching practices (in Eric's case, for instance, in the form of a deliberate decision to re-examine and replicate pre-training methods).

Andrews (1999b), Borg (1999a), and Reeves (2009) bear some relevance to the present research project because they attend to two of the foci of my study, PLLEs and KAG. Moreover, they enhance our understanding of the nature and impact of PLLEs since these experiences entail not only the observation and conceptualisation of teaching but also the development of subject matter knowledge. Subject matter knowledge will be explored in detail in 3.3.

#### **3.2.4 PLLEs and impact of teacher education courses**

First, considering that both participants in my study are fully qualified, each having completed a *five-year* EFL teacher education programme and a large number of teacher development courses in ELT, it seems appropriate to presume that the insights gained from the research done on the impact of teacher training upon PLLEs and pre-training beliefs will inform the present study. Second, the research to date has been focused on improving teacher training and the changes proposed have been based on the fact that the impact on

PLLEs is hard to counter. However, this research has centred only on teacher training or early teaching experiences, and has not considered that teacher training may actually have a *long term* impact. If this were the case, it may have important implications for approaches to teacher training since, for instance, there may be less need to worry about *immediate* impact. My study will intend to explore the impact (both short and long term) which the teachers' initial teacher training may have had on the development of their pre-training beliefs. It becomes necessary, therefore, to review the current picture with regard to the influence of teacher education on PLLEs.

Pre-training beliefs being resistant to change, it seems not surprising that several TTCs have been observed to exert little or no impact on the development of such beliefs (see Richardson, 1996). Evidence of this is found, for instance, in the four longitudinal case studies described in Gutierrez Almarza (1996). The study reports that, even though all four FL student teachers implemented the method acquired during their teacher training programme (Post-Graduate Certificate in Education; PGCE) in their teaching practice, they reacted to it in different ways. These reactions were not evident in their behaviour during teaching practice, where the teachers adopted the method efficiently, but during follow-up discussions about their teaching, where they showed different degrees of resistance towards modifying their pre-training knowledge. This means that the teaching method had a homogenising effect on the teachers' performance but not on their knowledge. Therefore, although the trainees experienced behavioural changes during the TTC (probably to conform to certain assessment standards), at a cognitive level their pre-training knowledge was not altered significantly. Referencing various sources and her own study regarding the aims of teacher education courses, Gutierrez Almarza highlights the importance of "bridging the gap between student knowledge and college knowledge" by helping trainees both to examine and challenge their pre-training knowledge and to reflect upon the way it relates to teacher education knowledge (pp. 73-74). The lack of impact of the PGCE course in this study on the trainees' pre-existing knowledge may be due to the fact that it simply introduced student teachers to a particular method and required them to implement it, without ever attending to the knowledge about teaching which they brought to the course. In addition, one could arguably presume that the nine months which this course took cannot compete against the thousands of hours which trainees were exposed to teaching models in their

PLLEs and that more exposure to alternative models and experimentation are required for the development of pre-training knowledge and beliefs.

Little belief change during a TTC is also observed in Peacock (2001). In this three-year longitudinal study, the belief development of 146 trainees enrolled in a BA in TESL (Bachelor of Arts in Teaching ESL) at the City University of Hong Kong was tracked using a questionnaire (Horwitz's Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory, BALLI) at different stages of the teacher education programme. The first results showed that these student teachers, unlike the 45 experienced teachers reported on in Peacock (1999), were more likely to agree with three core beliefs: "learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of new vocabulary words", "learning a foreign language is mostly a matter of learning a lot of grammar rules", and "people who speak more than one language well are very intelligent" (p. 184). The level of mismatch between trainee beliefs and teacher beliefs remained the same throughout the course despite the three years of instruction on L2 learning. Peacock then prepared and implemented a five-stage instruction package to help "eliminate any detrimental trainee beliefs before [teacher trainees] start teaching" (p. 177). This package consisted of awareness-raising tasks (trainees were informed about the mismatch between their beliefs and those of experienced teachers through the BALLI results), a reading task on the benefits of communicative approaches to L2 teaching, group discussions on the pros and cons of communicative approaches, and exposure to video-recorded L2 lessons where communicative methodologies were used successfully. Though the researcher claims that "trainee reactions to the whole instruction package were very positive and [that] apparent changes in trainee beliefs were observed" (p. 188), these changes were not measured or described in any way in the paper.

Different reasons have been given to explain why TTCs may have little if no influence on the growth of pre-training beliefs. First of all, explanations may be found in the very nature of such beliefs and in the use which teacher trainees make of them. Formed early in their minds and over a long period of time, prior beliefs are intrinsically resistant to change (Pajares, 1992). Besides, though PLLEs create beliefs and knowledge which represent a one-sided student's view of teaching, pre-service teachers tend to use these experiences as if they were prototypical and generalisable and, on entry to teacher training, they usually



question the validity of the teaching philosophies they are introduced to instead of testing their own lay beliefs (Holt-Reynolds, 1992).

Second, some studies point to the nature and content of TTCs. Making reference to a BA in TESL programme in Hong Kong, Richards and Pennington (1998) suggest, among other factors, the lack of a consistent teaching philosophy to which the teachers in their study may have been exposed due to the dissimilar cultural and experiential backgrounds of their tutors. Additionally, they mention that the new teaching principles which the then trainees were introduced to may not have been sufficiently emphasised during the course so as to impact their beliefs and teaching practices and help them sustain this new philosophy despite other influences. In Hayes (2005), none of the three Sri Lankan teacher educators studied had found the content of their own TTCs particularly useful. They all criticised the theoretical character of the courses, one of them specifically highlighting the poor models provided which did not help trainees to see theory applied in practice. In Pahissa and Tragant (2009), the teachers seem to have experienced limited or no influence from their TTCs, which the authors argue may be due to the fact that, in Catalonia, these courses do not provide enough hours of instruction and, moreover, they fail to attend to trainees' prior beliefs and, therefore, to alter their pre-existing conceptualisations of teaching.

Finally, teacher education programmes may fail to alter pre-training beliefs when the latter are, in some way, reinforced by the general educational system. This has been reported in some studies exploring the context of Hong Kong secondary schools. Analysing the first year of teaching of five graduates from a BA in TESL, Richards and Pennington (1998) found that the teachers abandoned the communicative principles and practices promoted in their TTC and taught according to the norms of the Hong Kong teaching tradition (teacher-centred, textbook-based and exam-oriented methodology with L1 used to supplement L2 instruction), which also happened to be the tradition they had been trained in themselves. This teaching behaviour was reinforced by other school members (the panel chair supervising new teachers' performance, other more experienced teachers, and the students) who expected them to preserve the status quo of the teaching context. The influence of the education system is also reported in Urmston (2003), a longitudinal study about the beliefs and knowledge of thirty pre-service teachers enrolled in a BA in TESL course in Hong Kong. Aware of the disparity between the communicative principles advocated by

their TTC and the teacher-centred and transmission-oriented teaching norms in Hong Kong, the student teachers stuck to their pre-existing beliefs and experienced few changes in their perspectives of key aspects of teaching during the course.

It has been suggested that, unless TTCs acknowledge the power of pre-training beliefs and encourage trainees to reflect upon their validity, they may do little to help student teachers to outgrow their existing rationales and to develop more professional conceptualisations of teaching (Holt-Reynolds, 1992). Several studies have actually stressed the need to attend to student teachers' language learning history (e.g., Gutierrez Almarza, 1996; Pahissa and Tragant, 2009; Reeves, 2009) and some others have even proposed ways to help trainees to move beyond their apprenticeship of observation [e.g., Bailey et al., 1996; Farrell, 1999; Johnson, 1994 (see 3.2.1)]. In Bailey et al. (1996), seven MA students (teachers-in-training) wrote and analysed their language learning autobiographies with the purpose of examining their PLLEs and the potential impact which these experiences may have on their teaching philosophy and practice. They found that the autobiography task had helped them to articulate their teaching beliefs and discover the rationale behind them, to interpret theory in the light of their own language learning experiences, to define their values and think of the implications of these in their future teaching decisions, and to become reflective teachers.

The autobiography assignment as used in this study certainly has a value since it allows trainees to examine their schooling experiences and to identify the teaching values and beliefs which might derive from them. It might even help them to predict how these pre-existing values and beliefs might influence their teaching practices in the future. This does not mean, however, that this awareness-raising task may have impacted on the development of such values and beliefs and that these teachers may not revert, perhaps unconsciously, to the models they witnessed in their PLLEs. An analysis of the true impact of PLLEs on student teachers' practices and the development of their own teaching theories appear to require that, in addition to reflecting upon their schooling experiences, trainees be engaged in teaching practice and subsequent introspective work.

This last point is shown, to a certain degree, in Farrell (1999). Like the teachers-in-training in Bailey et al. (1996), the 5 pre-service teachers in Farrell (1999) examined their PLLEs through a reflective assignment but, as suggested

by Johnson (1994), they were additionally introduced to alternative approaches to language teaching, in this case grammar teaching, and were given the opportunity to teach a class trying out one of the options presented. They all decided to adopt an inductive approach, even though, highly influenced by the way they had been taught L2 grammar themselves and by what they had found effective or not as learners, they gave different reasons for their choice. One of them claimed that the deductive approach he had been exposed to as a learner had made him passive and bored in class. Another teacher highlighted the effectiveness of the inductive approach used when she was a learner. The other three were not fully convinced about teaching inductively, two of them because they felt more secure with the deductive approach used in their L2 schooling experiences, while the other teacher thought the new communicative approach to language teaching he was encouraged to adopt was producing worse results than the more traditional methodology implemented in the past. After their teaching practice, they all held less extreme positions and claimed that no single grammar teaching approach was effective for all teaching situations. Farrell concludes that “the reflective assignment was useful as a tool for them to question their prior beliefs and experiences as students of English” (p. 12). While Farrell (1999) represents an advance in the attempt to help trainees to outgrow their apprenticeship of observation, it seems hard to validate the findings derived from the post-practice reflection since this is based on a single teaching practice and the input received during a very short (12-hour) course. That is, though the participants are said to have experienced some cognitive changes (especially in their perceptions of inductive and deductive grammar teaching), it is not possible to ascertain that these changes will persist and that they will be translated into experiential changes in the future.

The pessimistic view about “the stability and inflexibility of prior beliefs and images” (Kagan, 1992: 140) and of teacher training programmes as “not very powerful interventions” (Zeichner et al., 1987: 28) has been questioned by some studies which put forward a different conception of belief development. Sendan and Roberts (1998), for instance, criticised this view for being “over-simplistic” (p. 230) and for centring only on “the content and not the structure of student teacher thinking” (p. 233). They claimed that a distinction should be drawn between content and structure in personal theories, the former referring to “the semantic

distinctions made by the participating student teachers when classifying and discriminating teachers known to them, according to their pedagogic effectiveness”, whereas the latter having to do with “the ways in which individual constructs are hierarchically organised into a whole system of construction” (p. 231). Using repertory grid and interview data collected at different stages of a TTC over a period of 15 months, Sendan and Roberts (1998) report on the development of a student teacher’s personal theories about effective teaching. They observed that, although the contents of this trainee’s personal theories remained relatively stable, there were notable changes in the structure of such theories. Part of a “complex, evolutionary and perhaps cyclical” developmental process (p. 238), these modifications were characterised by the incorporation of new constructs, the reorganisation of the existing structure to contain the new additions, the mobility of constructs from one cluster to another and the subsequent combination of mobile constructs with stable ones, and the eventual constitution of a “more discriminating and thematically better organised” system of constructs (ibid.). These findings demonstrate that a study exploring the impact of a TTC on the development of pre-training beliefs would remain incomplete unless it involved an examination of both the content and structure of such beliefs at different stages of the training programme.

Further criticism of the aforesaid ‘inflexibility’ view is found in Cabaroglu and Roberts (2000). First, they explain that the lack of impact of pre-service teacher training on belief development may well have to do with deficiencies in the former to effect belief change rather than with the rigid nature of pre-existing beliefs per se. Second, they argue that many studies provide group-level findings, without making reference to belief changes at individual level. Finally, they claim that the observed rigidity of pre-training beliefs may derive from a misconception of the term ‘inflexibility’, which may have been used to mean “that a whole group has failed to move uni-directionally towards the beliefs promoted by the course” or that there has been “an absence of dramatic change” (p. 389). Instead, the authors interpret belief change as “*movement* or *development* in beliefs” (ibid.). Using in-depth interview data collected at three different times during a 36-week PGCE Secondary course in Modern Foreign Languages, Cabaroglu and Roberts (2000) report on the process, as opposed to the content, of belief development in 20 student teachers. They found that 19 of them exhibited belief development, two of them experiencing radical changes in some aspects of their belief system.

Only one participant appeared to have undergone no change. As a result of the study, different categories which reveal the nature of belief change processes were suggested: “awareness/realisation”, “consolidation/confirmation”, “re-labelling”, “addition”, “elaboration/polishing”, “re-ordering”, “linking-up”, “disagreement”, “reversal”, “pseudo change”, and “no change” (pp. 294-298). Moreover, they highlighted two features of the PGCE course studied which might have facilitated the trainees’ belief development: “early awareness raising” and “confrontation of pre-existing beliefs”, and increasing “self-regulated learning opportunities” extending over the whole TTC (p. 399). Sendan and Roberts (1998) and Cabaroglu and Roberts (2000) have not only advanced our understanding of the nature of pre-service belief development as involving variations in content and/or structure, but have also outlined the processes which might indicate and contribute to belief change.

More evidence of belief change during a TTC is found in Ng et al. (2010). They explored the beliefs about effective teaching of 37 pre-service teachers enrolled in a one-year postgraduate course (Secondary Diploma in Education). The data were collected through questionnaires (Likert-scale closed statements and open-ended questions) which were administered at four different times during the programme: at the beginning of the course before any school experience (Time 1, T1), after fieldwork observations (T2), and after the first and second teaching practices (T3, T4). The main findings revealed both “constants and variability in the beliefs of this group of pre-service teachers” (p. 287). Constant beliefs included, for instance, the opinion that good teachers have positive personality traits (e.g., being friendly, understanding, caring, and charismatic) and that they ensure student achievement. As regards variability, the two major constructs which were present across all times and which reflected most variation were “being in control” and “student achievement” (ibid.). The former evolved from “valuing expert control (T1) to valuing expert and charismatic control (T2) to fearing loss of control (T3) to valuing charismatic control (T4)” (p. 283). The latter fluctuated from student-focused beliefs in T1 and T2 (e.g., “making students feel successful” and “assisting students to work independently”), to self-focused beliefs and a loss of focus on learners in T3 (e.g., “know how to teach well in all situations”), to centring attention back to the students in T4 (ibid.). However, constants and variability in pre-service beliefs were explored and illustrated only at group level. No reference is made

whatsoever to belief development in individual student teachers, which would have provided a more comprehensive picture of their evolving beliefs about effective teaching. Ng et al. conclude that belief changes in their study were closely related to the school placement experiences the trainees engaged in. Apart from this broad connection, there is no indication in their article about what specific aspects of the teacher training programme might have facilitated such changes.

### **3.2.5 Summary**

Since the introduction of the notion of ‘apprenticeship of observation’, the study of early school experiences has been multidirectional. One strand of this work has focused on the nature and powerful influence of these experiences on teachers’ professional development. This has led to research on pre-training teaching beliefs, the impact of teacher training programmes upon belief change, and the transfer of prior methods and techniques to current teaching practices. The influence of prior schooling has also been studied through the subject matter knowledge and confidence which are acquired during pre-training education.

The present study intends to shed further light on the field by examining some of the aforesaid aspects from a different standpoint and by exploring some areas which appear to be under-researched. Unlike most of the studies above which have focused on inexperienced or novice teachers, the present research project will examine the PLLEs of very experienced EFL teachers and the way these experiences might still influence their teaching practices. It will also attempt to explore the effect which their own TTCs and their extensive teaching experience might have had on the development (if any) of their pre-existing beliefs and whether their PLLEs represent the sources of some of their current teaching beliefs. In addition, this study intends to fill a methodological gap by including class observation and stimulated recall and thus examine the impact (if any) which the teachers’ PLLEs may have on their teaching practices, the context in which transfers of prior methods and techniques (if any) are made, and the rationale behind the teachers’ decisions to revert to prior teaching models. Moreover, apart from their PLLEs, the study will centre on other schooling experiences (e.g., in maths and arts classes) which might have shaped their teaching beliefs and current classroom behaviour. Finally, teaching practices and

decisions will be examined in relation not to a single aspect but to multiple interacting factors (i.e. PLLEs, KAG, GRPK, and CFs).

### 3.3 Teacher cognition and KAG

The second aspect to be examined in the present study is the participants' KAG, specifically their knowledge about *English* grammar. Grammatical features will be treated both *at* and *above* the sentence level. Grammar at the sentence level will refer to "the rules that govern word formation (**morphology**) and sentence structure (**syntax**) in a particular language" [emphasis in original] (Andrews, 2007: 61). Within morphology, inflectional rules and word-formation processes (including derivation and compounding) will be considered. Regarding syntax, attention will be paid to the participants' knowledge of both structural *categories* (i.e. the elements of a sentence such as words, phrases, and clauses) and their *functions* within the sentence (e.g., subject, object, complement, and adjunct). There will also be a focus on the knowledge of descriptive grammar items like tenses, direct/indirect speech, conditional sentences and passive voice.

In addition to KAG at the sentence level, there will be a focus on **discourse**, defined by Carter and McCarthy as "the patterns on language used beyond the level of the sentence or beyond the individual speaking turn" (2006: 8). A consideration of grammar above the sentence level is included in this study in view of the fact that grammar and discourse are linked in such a way that the grammaticality of certain language features can only be established within their context of occurrence. Andrews exemplifies this point saying that "the use of articles (i.e. making the choice between *a(n)*, *the* and zero article) is often determined by considerations beyond the sentence" (2007: 62). Thus, in the following sequence of sentences: '*At the party I met an engineer, a doctor, and a teacher. A teacher said she had read my book twice*', the ungrammaticality caused by the use of the indefinite article 'a' instead of the definite article 'the' can be determined only if the structure is analysed beyond the sentence level, that is, if, in this case, the preceding sentence is considered. A discourse feature which is of vital importance when analysing grammatical awareness above the sentence level is **grammatical cohesion**, which refers to "the ways in which grammatical [...] links across sentences or utterances create connected text" (ibid.). Grammatical devices which are often used to establish cohesion and

which might determine the grammaticality of a statement are reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction.

A final aspect to be considered with respect to the participants' KAG is their knowledge of different **levels of formality** in grammar use, including spoken grammar. According to the demands of the context in which the teachers in this study work (national and institutional curriculum, syllabus, and textbooks used), they are most likely to adopt a **descriptive** treatment of grammar, which will focus on a description of how people actually use grammar in both spoken and written discourse rather than on how people ought to speak and write (prescriptive grammar). Therefore, it is expected that opportunities to deal with spoken and written grammar will arise.

In relation to the type of knowledge which will be examined, the present research project explores both the participants' *implicit* and *explicit* KAG. According to Ellis, "implicit knowledge is procedural, is held unconsciously and can only be verbalized if it is made explicit. It is accessed rapidly and easily and thus is available for use on rapid, fluent communication" (2005: 214). On the other hand, explicit knowledge is defined as "that knowledge of language about which users are consciously aware" (Ellis, 2004: 229). Unlike implicit knowledge, explicit knowledge is characterised by being "conscious", "declarative", "potentially verbalisable", and "learnable" (ibid.: 235-236, 239-240). Firstly, Ellis claims that explicit knowledge can be brought to consciousness. A distinction should be drawn here between intuitive awareness and conscious awareness. With reference to grammar knowledge, "intuitive awareness is evident in the ability to recognize instantly that a sentence is ungrammatical", whereas "conscious awareness is evident when [one] can cognize why a sentence is ungrammatical" (ibid.: 236). Thus, if one of the teachers in this study is able to claim that a sentence is ungrammatical and can even identify the faulty feature (i.e. has intuitive awareness) but she is unable to explain the rule which has been broken (i.e. has no conscious awareness), she can be said to have implicit but no explicit knowledge of that grammatical feature. Secondly, explicit knowledge is "declarative" in that it comprises facts about the aspect which you have explicit knowledge of. For instance, a person who is said to have explicit knowledge of transitive verbs in English 'declaratively' knows that such verbs require a direct object. Thirdly, explicit knowledge is "potentially verbalisable". This means that, in general, explicit knowledge can be put into words, although there are a few cases



in which it exists independently of whether it can be explained. Ellis also claims that, “although metalanguage is not an essential aspect of explicit knowledge, it would seem to be closely related” (ibid.: 240). Therefore, the development of explicit knowledge about a field of study will usually involve the acquisition of metalanguage about such a field. Finally, explicit knowledge is “learnable” since, for instance in the case of KAG, anybody can learn facts about the grammar of a language.

Having defined grammar as understood in the context of this study and having described the types of knowledge which will be explored, I will move on to discuss the research done on KAG. As explained in 3.1, there has existed a conceptual confusion in the field of teacher cognition ever since it became a focus of study. Naturally, this affects our understanding and the exploration of individual and clusters of teacher cognitions. In the case of KAG, it has been examined basically under the labels ‘knowledge about grammar’ (e.g., Bloor, 1986; Borg, 2001), and ‘knowledge about language’ (e.g., Chandler et al., 1988; Wray, 1993; and Williamson and Hardman, 1995), though it has also been studied within broader categories such as ‘subject-matter cognitions’ (e.g., Woods, 1996) and ‘teacher language awareness’ (e.g., Andrews, 1999b, 2001, 2006, 2007). In the interest of clarity and organisation, I will start by describing the beginnings of an interest in subject matter knowledge and then will continue by reporting on the research done on teacher language awareness and, more specifically, on KAG.

### **3.3.1 Subject matter knowledge**

A concern for subject matter knowledge dates back to the early 1980s. In their review on teachers’ pedagogical thoughts, judgements, decisions, and behaviour, Shavelson and Stern raised the issue about how subject-matter knowledge is integrated into teachers’ planning and teaching, and recommended that “research should examine how teachers communicate subject matter structure and the manner in which they do so” (1981: 491). The nature of subject-matter knowledge and the way it was made accessible to students became a major research focus later on in the 1980s.

In the mid-1980s, Shulman and his colleagues from Stanford University worked on a series of studies on the professional knowledge base of teaching.

First, they investigated knowledge growth in teaching in a group of novice teachers (Shulman, 1986; Wilson et al., 1987). Their interest was in “what teachers know about their subject matter, where and when they acquired that knowledge, how and why that knowledge is transformed during teaching or teacher education, and how knowledge is used in classroom instruction” (Wilson et al., 1987: 110). Then, they explored the sources of the knowledge base for teaching and the process of pedagogical reasoning through the literature in philosophy and psychology, and through a group of case studies on novice and experienced practitioners (Shulman, 1987). The findings of the Stanford studies are very relevant to the understanding of two of the cognitions explored in the present research project: KAG and GRPK. Within the framework of their studies, KAG would fall into the broader category ‘content/subject matter knowledge’ and GRPK into ‘pedagogical content knowledge’. The findings on the latter cognition will be explained in 3.4.

Shulman and his associates define the knowledge base in teaching as “the body of understanding, knowledge, skills, and dispositions that a teacher needs to perform effectively in a given teaching situation” (Wilson et al., 1987: 106). They identify seven categories into which teacher knowledge could be organised: *content or subject matter knowledge*, *pedagogical content knowledge*, *general pedagogical knowledge*, *curriculum knowledge*, *knowledge of learners*, *knowledge of educational contexts*, and *knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values*. Subject matter knowledge, which is the focus of this section, comprises what Schwab (1964) called knowledge of the substantive and syntactical structures of the discipline: “The substantive structures include the ideas, facts, and concepts of the field, as well as the relationships among those ideas, facts, and concepts. The syntactic structures involve knowledge of the ways in which the discipline creates and evaluates new knowledge” (Wilson et al., 1987: 118).

Shulman (1987) argues that subject matter knowledge is a central feature of the knowledge base of teaching and discusses some of the many responsibilities teachers have in relation to this type of knowledge. First, teachers serve as the primary source of students’ comprehension of content and the way they communicate their knowledge highly influences what the learners regard as central and peripheral with respect to that discipline. The teachers’ level of understanding of the subject matter also determines how effectively they

communicate the content of the field. Unless they have a flexible and multifaceted comprehension of the subject matter, they will not be able to provide a group of different learners with alternative explanations of the same ideas and concepts. Finally, the nature of the teachers' content knowledge as well as their attitudes toward and enthusiasm for the subject matter highly shape the ideas, attitudes, and values they communicate to students in relation to the field, which naturally influences the learners' comprehension and perception of the subject matter.

The final point to refer to with respect to the findings of the Stanford studies is their theoretical framework of pedagogical reasoning, which consists of the following processes: **comprehension**, **transformation** (*preparation, representation, selection, adaptation, and tailoring*), **instruction**, **evaluation**, **reflection**, and **new comprehension** (Wilson et al., 1987; Shulman, 1987). Subject matter knowledge plays a fundamental role particularly in the first stage, **comprehension**, though it also has a bearing on the other processes. The first process involves comprehension of subject matter and educational purposes. Regarding comprehension of subject matter, teachers are expected to critically understand the substantive and syntactic structure of what they teach and, when possible, to master it in several ways. They should know how an idea relates to other ideas within the same discipline and to ideas in related domains. This type of content understanding does not distinguish, say, an English language teacher from non-teaching peers such as English-Spanish translators. What distinguishes them is the capacity of the former "to transform the content knowledge he or she possesses into forms that are pedagogically powerful and yet adaptive to the variations in ability and background presented by the students" (Shulman, 1987: 15). This last aspect is the concern of the second process, **transformation**, and will be described in detail in 3.4, along with the rest of the processes of Shulman et al.'s model of pedagogical reasoning.

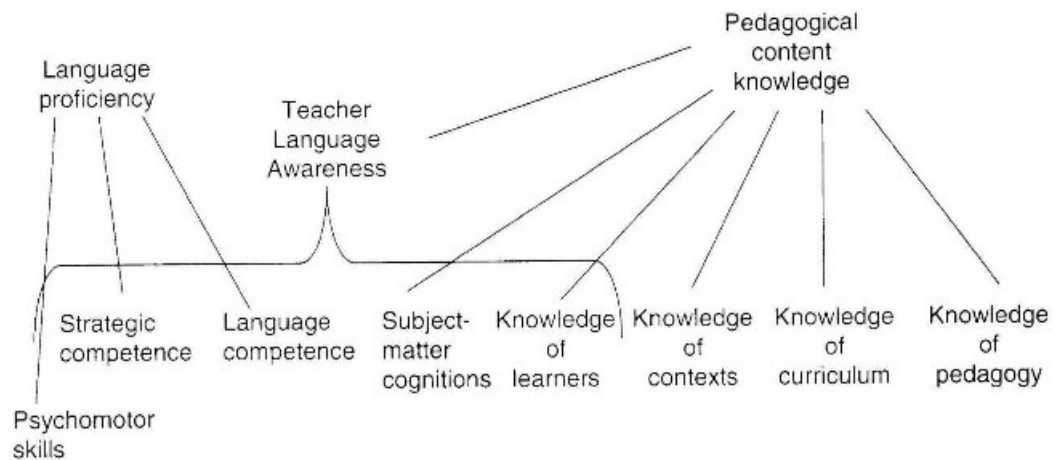
### 3.3.2 Teachers' language awareness

Within subject matter knowledge, teacher language awareness (TLA) refers specifically to teachers' knowledge of language. Andrews' extensive work since the mid-1990s has shed light on the nature of TLA and the way it relates to other constructs and has helped to examine its impact on pedagogical practice. Though he sees TLA as comprising more language items than grammar,

Andrews has studied this cognition mostly with exclusive reference to grammar as he believes that the explicit knowledge of this language content forms “the core of any L2 teacher’s metalinguistic awareness” (1999b: 164) [NB: Andrews’ *teacher metalinguistic awareness* was replaced by *TLA* in subsequent publications]. Despite his specific focus on grammar, his contributions bear relevance to TLA in general, which is why some of his work has been discussed in this section separately from other studies examining KAG (see 3.3.3).

Similar to Shulman (1987)’s distinction between the use of subject matter knowledge made by teachers and that made by non-teaching peers, Andrews (1999b) distinguishes between “the language knowledge/awareness of the educated user of a language and that required by the teacher of that language” (p. 163). Both need to draw on their implicit and explicit knowledge of the language in order to communicate effectively in that language and, in the case of the teacher, additionally to serve as a model for her/his students. Yet the language teacher also “needs to reflect upon that knowledge and ability, and upon her [sic] knowledge of the underlying systems of the language, in order to ensure that her students receive maximally useful input for learning. These reflections bring an extra cognitive dimension to the teacher’s language knowledge/awareness, which informs the tasks of planning and teaching” (ibid.). Andrews prefers to use the term ‘awareness’ instead of ‘knowledge’ to highlight that, in addition to the declarative knowledge of the language, the former involves the use made of such knowledge (i.e. its procedural dimension).

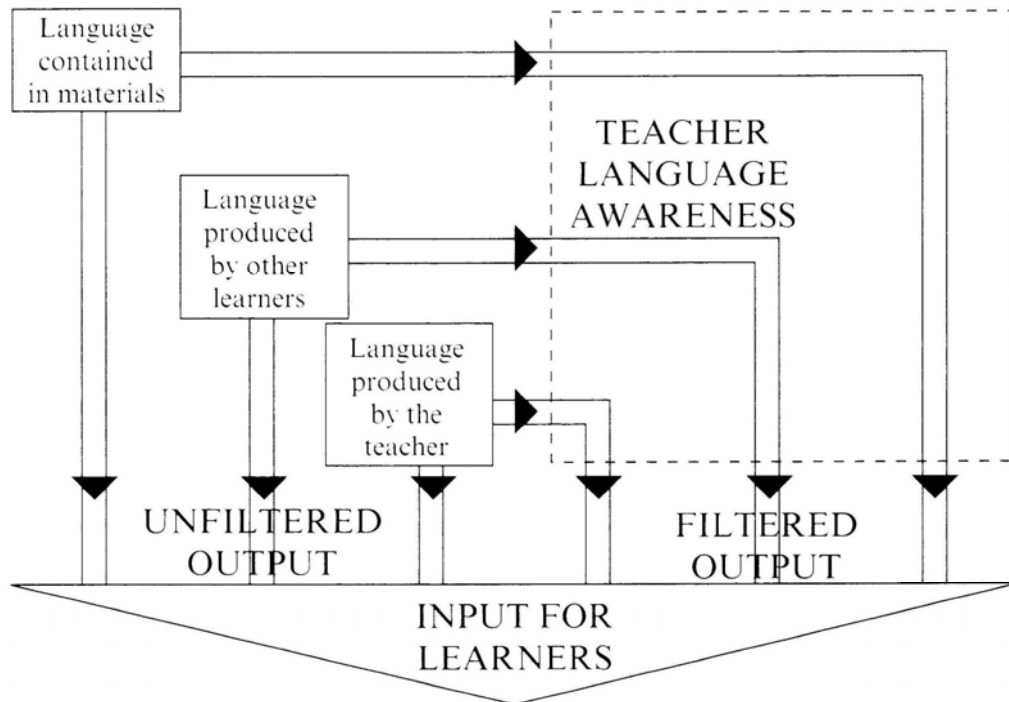
Andrews (2001, 2007) provides a comprehensive description of what TLA entails and how it relates to other constructs. As figure 2 shows, TLA is part of a teacher’s pedagogical content knowledge and comprises subject-matter cognitions, knowledge of learners, strategic competence, and language competence. The latter two, in turn, form part of a teacher’s language proficiency (formerly referred to by Bachman, 1990, as ‘communicative language ability’) along with his/her psychomotor skills. This figure somehow reflects the complex way in which subject-matter knowledge interacts with other constructs. In my study, KAG is an aspect of TLA but treated independently of pedagogical content knowledge, as will be explained in 3.4.

**Figure 2:** TLA and other constructs (Andrews, 2007: 31)

In addition to defining TLA, Andrews (1999b, 2001) examines the impact TLA has on pedagogical practice. Andrews claims that TLA plays a fundamental role in structuring the input for learners. Figure 3 shows that there are three main sources of input (materials, learners, and the teacher) which may reach learners in ‘unfiltered’ or ‘filtered’ form depending on the mediation of the teacher. The quality of the ‘filtered’ input which the learners are exposed to can be influenced by a number of factors such as “time constraints, [...] the extent of the teacher’s explicit knowledge, her [sic] confidence in her own knowledge, and her awareness in making use of her knowledge” (1999b: 166). Andrews (1999b) reports on the impact of the metalinguistic awareness of three teachers (Rose, Benjamin, and Alex) upon the input made available for learning. The impact was potentially negative in Rose and Benjamin, but positive in the case of Alex. Rose failed to filter the content in the materials and uncritically accepted everything that the materials said. The ‘limitations’ of her metalinguistic awareness were also evident during a lesson when, while explaining changes in modal verbs, she produced statements which were potentially misleading for the students. She then acknowledged these ‘limitations’ and recalled a recent experience in which she had been unable to explain the meaning of passive voice and the reasons for selecting passive or active voice. Benjamin failed to explain the meaning/use of the future continuous tense and to show the differences between this tense and other future tenses. Then, he attempted to explain some sentences in future continuous by paraphrasing them, which became potential sources of greater confusion. Finally, Alex showed his language proficiency and confidence in the

classroom by regularly making use of the learners' contributions as a major source of input into his grammar teaching and by filtering the deficiencies of the input provided by the textbook he was using.

**Figure 3:** TLA & the process of filtering input for learners (Andrews, 2007: 39)



The impact of TLA on pedagogical practice is also discussed by Grossman et al. (1989), Leech (1994), Thornbury (1997), and Wright and Bolitho (1993). With reference to the wide impact of teachers' subject matter knowledge on their practices, Grossman et al. claim that "knowledge, or lack of knowledge, of the content can affect how teachers critique textbooks, how they select material to teach, how they structure their courses, and how they conduct instruction" (1989: 28). Wright and Bolitho argue that TLA may have a positive effect on several pedagogic tasks such as lesson planning, materials evaluation and design, syllabus/curriculum interpretation and design, learner assessment, and other teacher tasks across the curriculum. They claim that a lack of TLA, which may apply equally to NS and NNS teachers, is often made evident at the classroom level, "for example when a teacher is unable to identify and compensate for shortcomings in a coursebook, or is 'caught out' by a learner's question on the language", and add that "in these situations, teachers need to

draw upon their linguistic knowledge, not to provide ‘right answers’, but to provide the necessary expertise to help the learner to overcome difficulties” (1993: 292). Making reference to the ‘mature communicative knowledge’ of grammar required by the language teacher, Leech (1994) lists the characteristics a ‘model’ language teacher should have:

“a) be capable of putting across a sense of how grammar interacts with the lexicon as a communicative system [...]; b) be able to analyse the grammatical problems that learners encounter; c) have the ability and confidence to evaluate the use of grammar, especially by learners, against criteria of accuracy, appropriateness and expressiveness; d) be aware of the contrastive relations between native language and foreign language; e) understand and implement the processes of simplification by which overt knowledge of grammar can best be presented to learners at different stages of learning”. (1994: 18).

Finally, in line with these arguments, Thornbury describes the potential consequences of limitations in TLA: “a failure on the part of the teacher to anticipate learners’ learning problems and a consequent inability to plan lessons that are pitched at the right level; an inability to interpret coursebook syllabuses and materials and to adapt these to the specific needs of the learners; an inability to deal satisfactorily with errors, or to field learners’ queries; and a general failure to earn the confidence of the learners due to a lack of basic terminology and ability to present new language clearly and efficiently” (1997: xii).

The following two tables, designed by Andrews, summarise the impact of TLA on lesson preparation and in the classroom. In each descriptor, only the extreme ends of a continuum are shown. In the case of **Table 3**, Andrews claims that, within each individual teacher, the factors influencing the operation of TLA will combine and interact in different ways, and that this combination and interaction are not stable and may well differ from class to class, especially attitudinal and contextual factors. In **Table 4**, it can be noted that the influence of TLA upon the teacher’s classroom performance is mainly about the teacher’s ability to transform the output from the three sources mentioned above (learners, materials, and the teacher) into input suitable for learning. There is also some information about the teacher’s ability to perform in ‘real time’ and to use metalanguage to support learning. It should have been made explicit in this table, however, as in Table 3, that professional, attitudinal, and contextual factors highly

influence the application of TLA in the classroom. Some examples Andrews himself provides of these influences are: a) “the quality of a teacher’s subject-matter knowledge and language proficiency”, “awareness of language from the learners’ perspective”, “the teacher’s beliefs about grammar and experience of teaching grammar” (professional factors); b) “self-confidence or lack of confidence about grammar, and readiness to engage seriously with content-related issues” (attitudinal factors); c) “time”, and “syllabus” (contextual factors) (Andrews, 2007: 41, 46). These influences and the way they interact are precisely one of the foci of the present research project.

**Table 3:** Impact of TLA on lesson preparation (Andrews, 2007: 42-43)

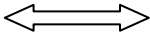
Influences upon the impact of TLA on lesson preparation			
Influential factors	Positive	←————→	Negative
<b>Contextual factors (i.e. time/ syllabus)</b>	Teacher feels he/she has, e.g., sufficient time for lesson preparation, and sufficient freedom/ control over content of teaching to engage fully with language-related issues of lesson before entering classroom. Teacher views students as co-operative/responsive.	↔	Teacher feels he/she has limited chances to engage with language-related issues before lesson because of, e.g., lack of time and/or lack of personal control over content of lesson. Teacher views students as unco-operative and/or unresponsive.
<b>Attitudinal factors (e.g. interest/ confidence)</b>	Teacher is interested in language-related issues and considers it important to engage with them personally and directly. Teacher has confidence in own explicit grammar knowledge, and communicative language ability. Teacher is also confident about assuming responsibility for shaping the language-related content of the lesson.	↔	Teacher finds language-related issues uninteresting and perceives no need to engage with them personally and directly. Teacher lacks confidence in own explicit grammar knowledge and communicative language ability and may be frightened by grammar. As a result, teacher may adopt avoidance strategies, such as abdicating language content responsibility to textbooks.
<b>Professional factors (e.g. knowledge/ experience)</b>	Teacher has good explicit grammar knowledge, good communicative language ability and is aware of the importance of the learner perspective on language-related issues. Teacher also has positive previous experiences of grammar teaching. These factors combine to inform pre-lesson reflections about	↔	Teacher has limited explicit grammar knowledge, and/or weaknesses in communicative language ability. Teacher has limited awareness of language from the learner perspective, and limited and/or negative previous experiences of grammar teaching. Any one or more of these can have a potentially negative impact on



	<p>language-related issues, and therefore to influence language-related aspects of preparation, e.g.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identifying key features for learning.</li> <li>2. Making them salient in prepared input.</li> <li>3. Matching practice tasks to learners' level and lesson objectives.</li> </ol>		<p>pre-lesson reflections and language-related aspects of preparation, e.g.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identifying key features for learning.</li> <li>2. Making them salient in prepared input.</li> <li>3. Matching practice tasks to learners' level and lesson objectives.</li> </ol>
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**Table 4:** Impact of TLA in the classroom (Andrews, 2007: 44-45)

Impact of TLA in the classroom		
Positive		Negative
Teacher acts as a bridge between the language content of the materials and the learners, making salient the key features of the grammar area.	↔	Teacher does little or nothing to act as a bridge / make salient the key features of the grammar area (e.g. doesn't go beyond the language content as presented in the materials).
Teacher 'filters' the content of published materials and notices/avoids potential pitfalls.	↔	Teacher is unwilling/unable to 'filter' content. As a result, teacher may overlook or accept misconceptions and/or inaccuracies in materials.
Teacher 'filters' own classroom output (spoken and written) to ensure that it is <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. structurally accurate</li> <li>2. functionally appropriate</li> <li>3. clearly expressed</li> <li>4. pitched at the learners' level</li> <li>5. an adequate basis for learner generalisations</li> </ol>	↔	Teacher does not appear to 'filter' own classroom output (spoken and/or written). As a result teacher's output may be <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. structurally inaccurate</li> <li>2. functionally inappropriate</li> <li>3. confusingly expressed</li> <li>4. pitched at an inappropriate level for the learners</li> <li>5. an inadequate basis for learner generalisations</li> </ol>
Teacher 'filters' learner output (as appropriate in the context of form-focused activity). Mediation takes the learners' perspective into account and is <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. correct, precise and intelligible</li> <li>2. structurally accurate</li> <li>3. functionally appropriate</li> <li>4. pitched at the learners' level</li> <li>5. an adequate basis for learner generalisations</li> </ol>	↔	Teacher's mediation of learner output in form-focused activity is inadequate. As a result, incorrect learner output may be ignored, the learners' perspective may not be taken into account and teacher mediation may be <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. incorrect, imprecise and/or unintelligible</li> <li>2. structurally inaccurate</li> <li>3. functionally inappropriate</li> <li>4. pitched at an inappropriate level for the learners</li> <li>5. an inadequate basis for learner generalisation</li> </ol>
Teacher is able to operate 'filter' in 'real time', reacting spontaneously and constructively to issues of language	↔	Teacher has difficulty in operating 'filter' in 'real time', and in reacting spontaneously and constructively to

content as they arise in class.		issues of language content as they arise in class.
Teacher is able to employ metalanguage to support learning correctly and appropriately.		Teacher's use of metalanguage to support learning is incorrect and/or inappropriate (e.g. excessive, or at a level beyond the learners' comprehension).

In the conclusion to his 2001 paper, Andrews makes reference to one of the limitations of his study of a group of NNS EFL teachers in the context of China: "given that the data were collected by a native-speaking researcher, it is inevitable that both the gathering and interpretation may have been affected by differences of cultural and linguistic background" (p. 89). This is not a minor issue when it comes to the exploration of teachers' cognitions. As stated in the introduction to this thesis, most language teacher cognition research has been carried out in English-speaking countries (or Hong Kong), and in relation to the cognitions and practices of NS teachers. The few studies which focused on NNS teachers of English in non-English-speaking countries (e.g., Andrews, 1999b, 2001, 2006; Andrews and McNeill, 2005; Borg, S. 2005) were done mostly by English NS researchers who, as Andrews points out, did not share either the cultural or linguistic background of the participants. My study has been designed to address this gap, among others, since both the participants and the researcher are Spanish-speaking, and born and raised in the context of Argentina (Buenos Aires province, to be more precise). Thus, the relevance of this study can be attributed not only to the aspects being examined but also to the context being explored and the people (both teachers and researcher) participating in it.

The last study to be mentioned in this section is reported in Andrews (2006), which discusses the evolution of TLA with particular reference to grammar and grammar teaching. The three participants' TLA was examined at two stages of their careers, in 1996-1997 (Andrews, 1999b, 2001) and in 2004, when they had accumulated at least 10 years of teaching experience (Andrews, 2006). A mixed approach was used, most data being qualitative (interviews, classroom observations, and teacher narrative) and some quantitative (test scores). Some of the findings of this study seem to bear relevance to the present research project. First, while more assured in general as EFL teachers, two of the informants still lacked confidence when dealing with grammar. The third teacher had developed more confidence in her overall teaching approach and the role of

grammar in it, which was reflected in her classroom performance. Second, the teachers' knowledge of grammar, as indicated by the test scores, appeared to have changed remarkably little. This was surprising for Andrews since he expected to find some improvement given the elementary nature of all the grammar items in the test, and in view of the fact that the teachers had 8 years more of teaching experience and had engaged, during this time, in various forms of continuing professional development (though he clarifies that this development was not concerned with grammar). However, the study also revealed that the three teachers' grammar-related cognitions had shown some evolution. Two of them, for instance, now had "less compartmentalised views of grammar, and an enhanced awareness of the role of grammar in discourse" (p. 15). Two teachers also demonstrated "a broader understanding of the methodological options for dealing with grammar" (ibid.). In his conclusion, Andrews highlights "the uneven nature of teacher professional development generally" and states that "teacher learning in an area is dependent upon a teacher investing time and effort in that specific area and actively searching out related professional challenges (Tsui, 2003)" and that "those teachers who do not actively seek knowledge do not get it (Borg, 2005)" (p. 16). These conclusions are significant in the context of my study since they indicate that, though each of the participants has more than 30 years of EFL teaching experience, there is no reason to expect that they will have developed a solid knowledge base of grammar and grammar teaching.

### **3.3.3 Knowledge about language and KAG**

Some early studies examining teachers' subject matter knowledge with specific reference to language/grammar include Bloor (1986), Chandler et al. (1988), Williamson and Hardman (1995), and Wray (1993). Bloor (1986) reports on the declarative knowledge of discrete grammatical categories and functions of 63 undergraduate students entering Modern Languages and Linguistics at two English universities. The results revealed "fairly widespread ignorance" among the learners (p. 159). In a questionnaire administered to 917 primary student-teachers, Chandler et al. (1988) measured the informants' knowledge of eight parts of speech. Even though the authors found gaps in the students' knowledge of language similar to the ones suggested by Bloor (1986), they concluded that the results were "somewhat higher than might pessimistically be supposed" (p. 172). Wray (1993) examined the knowledge about language (KAL) of primary

student teachers at the beginning and at the end of a postgraduate training course. These trainees were assessed on their knowledge of a small number of grammatical forms and the differences between spoken and written language. Wray found that “the level of grammatical knowledge of these student-teachers was not particularly high” (p. 55), thus echoing the findings reported by Bloor (1986). With respect to the participants’ knowledge of spoken and written language, they showed a high ability to rewrite an extract of spoken discourse in a written form which was appropriate to a particular audience (linguistic knowledge), but many of them experienced real problems in explaining the linguistic changes they had made (meta-linguistic knowledge). Their high linguistic ability was not surprising considering the fact that they were all educated native speakers of the language concerned. The findings thus indicated that the prospective teachers possessed sound implicit knowledge of English but lacked sufficient explicit knowledge of the language to explain the reasons for the linguistic changes they had made to a piece of writing. The test scores at the end of the postgraduate training course revealed that “there had been little overall significant change in awareness of parts of speech” (p. 64) and “modest improvements” in the development of the student-teachers’ meta-linguistic knowledge (p. 66). The teacher training course appeared to have had no impact on the development of their KAL. Finally, Williamson and Hardman (1995) studied the grammatical knowledge of 99 primary teacher trainees. Unlike previous studies, Williamson and Hardman examined not only parts of speech (words) but also elements of clause and sentence structure. The findings showed significant gaps in the trainees’ knowledge about grammatical items at the sentence level, misconceptions about language, and a lack of a metalanguage for analysing language use.

These four early studies on KAL appear to bear partial relevance to the focus and context of my research project. First, they centred on a limited number of parts of speech which does not represent the scope of grammatical structures an EFL teacher has to deal with such as verb tenses, conditional sentences, and direct/indirect speech. Besides, the four studies were interested in discrete parts of speech at the sentence level, whereas my study focuses on grammatical items both at and above the sentence level, as was explained in the introduction to this section. Second, while the four studies examined only explicit KAL, my study considers both the teachers’ explicit and implicit KAG. Third, the four studies

explored the knowledge of NS teacher trainees planning to teach English to NS students in the UK. My research project, on the other hand, is concerned with the knowledge of experienced NNS practitioners teaching English to NNS learners in an EFL context. These differences in the profile of the participants and the contexts in which they work may mean that they have different knowledge and understanding of the subject matter as well as a different language focus in the classroom. Despite these dissimilarities and the little relevance they may have to my research project, the aforementioned studies have been included in this section not only because they have been widely cited in the literature but also because they represent the first attempts to collect data about KAL and because they influenced subsequent research projects (e.g., Andrews, 1999a) which are highly significant to the present study.

Andrews (1994) also examined the grammatical knowledge of student-teachers but, unlike the studies above, it focused on an EFL context. Andrews used a questionnaire to explore 82 TEFL trainers' perceptions of their trainees' KAG. First, according to the trainers' impressions, 53.5% of their trainees had inadequate grammar knowledge when they started their TTC. They characterised KAG as the knowledge of grammatical terminology and concepts, the ability to reflect on and analyse grammar points, and the capacity to use grammatical knowledge for pedagogical purposes. Second, the students' overall teaching performance received a rating of more than 50% of inadequacy in the five areas explored, the two areas obtaining the highest level of inadequacy being "explaining grammatical points" (64.2%) and "identifying correctly students' grammatical errors" (59%). Finally, the trainers rated their *own* KAG before their teacher training, after initial training, and at the moment of completing the questionnaire. 50.6% of them rated their KAG as inadequate before teacher training, 78.1% as adequate/good after initial training, and 96.1% as good/very good at the moment. When asked about the factors contributing to improving their KAG, the aspects more frequently mentioned were: "teaching exam classes (FCE/CPE), becoming a trainer/a trainer trainer, teaching language awareness courses, and writing EFL coursebooks/teachers' resource books" (p. 79). If these claims were generalisable, one could assume that the participants of my study have a high level of grammatical knowledge since both of them have extensive experience teaching exam classes and language awareness courses, and training prospective EFL teachers. Although Andrews (1994) enhances our

understanding of prospective teachers' KAG and provides relevant information about the perceptions of TEFL trainers with a professional profile similar to that of the participants in this research project, the study reports on the perceptions and KAG of mainly native speakers (97.5% of the student-teachers that the trainers encounter in their courses are apparently native speakers) and, as he acknowledges, it is based merely on a series of impressions.

More relevant to my study is Andrews (1999a) since it examines the actual KAG of 20 NNS practising teachers. These teachers had an average of two years' teaching experience and taught EFL in Hong Kong secondary schools. Their KAG was then compared with that of three other groups: 20 NNS prospective EFL teachers, 10 NS prospective EFL teachers with a background in English Studies, and 10 NS prospective EFL teachers with a background in Modern Languages. Andrews used a 60-item test which consisted of four sections, in each of which the informants had to perform a different task: 1. recognise metalanguage: grammatical categories (e.g., verb, noun, and relative pronoun) and grammatical functions (e.g., subject and direct object); 2. produce metalinguistic terms (e.g., question tag and adverb of frequency); 3. identify and correct errors; and 4. explain grammatical rules. First, the findings showed that the teachers with classroom experience outperformed the prospective teachers, which "would suggest that teaching experience may indeed have a significant impact upon the development of a teacher's explicit knowledge of grammar and grammatical terminology" (pp. 155-156). Andrews acknowledges, however, that the study did not reveal what aspects of teachers' classroom experience (quality, quantity, or both) determined their level of KAG. Second, the NNS subjects, especially the NNS teachers, did in general better than the NS participants. This may mean that the language learning experiences NNS students have to go through might influence the development of their explicit knowledge of grammar and grammatical terminology. Third, the NS prospective teachers with a background in Modern Languages performed significantly better than those with a background in English Studies, which might suggest that the type of tertiary studies teacher trainees undertake highly influences their development of KAG. Fourth, with respect to the performance of the NNS practising teachers, these practitioners did considerably better in 'metalanguage recognition' and 'error correction' (obtaining a mean of 84.9%) than in 'metalanguage production' and 'rules and explanations' (mean: 54.2%). Andrews notes that "given that the

subjects in this group are all serving teachers and that the latter tasks did not involve complex metalanguage or obscure rules of grammar, this is cause for concern, particularly since their classroom practice typically involves rule explanation” (p. 156). Finally, although Andrews makes no reference to this fact in particular, there was a huge difference between the subjects’ performance in ‘error correction’ (mean: 86.3%) and that in ‘rules and explanations’ (mean: 26%). This gap is wider in NS participants (mean: 90.1% - 19.5%) than in NNS subjects (mean: 81.8% - 32.4%). The participants’ ability to identify and correct errors might reveal that their *implicit* KAG is high whereas their inability to explain grammatical rules might show that their *explicit* KAG is markedly low.

Andrews (1999a) is without doubt more significant to my research project than previous studies in the field not only because it focuses on the KAG of practising NNS practitioners teaching EFL at secondary schools but also because it examines their knowledge of more relevant grammatical items using test exercises which are similar to the grammaticality judgement task to be used in this study. Yet, like in earlier studies, Andrews’ findings reveal information only about the participants’ *explicit* KAG, disregarding their *implicit* KAG. Moreover, only reference to grammatical aspects at the sentence level is made, without considering items beyond the sentence level. The present study intends to fill these gaps and to cast light on the KAG of NNS practising EFL educators, especially teachers with extensive teaching experience, and of the relationship between teachers’ declarative KAG and their teaching practices.

Although there are several studies examining language teachers’ KAG (or KAL), very few researchers have explored the connection between this type of knowledge and teaching practices. Borg acknowledges this gap, claiming that “our understandings of the relationships between declarative subject matter knowledge and practice in language teaching are still undeveloped” (2003b: 106). Research on this relationship has already been discussed in 3.3.2 when examining the impact of TLA on pedagogical practice (Andrews, 1999b, 2001; Leech, 1994; Thornbury, 1997; and Wright and Bolitho, 1993). Further research in the field includes Andrews and McNeill (2005), Borg (2001), and Johnston and Goettsch (2000).

Johnston and Goettsch (2000) focus on three categories of teacher knowledge derived from the framework introduced by Shulman (1987): content knowledge (in this case, KAG), pedagogical content knowledge (more

specifically, GRPK), and knowledge of learners. Using classroom observations and follow-up interviews, Johnston and Goettsch examined the grammar explanations of four experienced ESL grammar teachers in the USA. Relevant to this section are the findings obtained in relation to the teachers' KAG. They revealed that the teachers drew on three main sources of knowledge: "*building a 'database' of knowledge* [i.e. a mental record of grammar-related aspects derived basically from their own teaching experience and which the teacher can resort to when teaching], *working through the process of knowledge* [this process-oriented view of teacher's knowledge regards grammar teaching as a problem-solving activity], and *drawing on outside resources* [i.e. reference materials, Internet forums, and other people such as peers, teachers, and native speakers]" [emphasis added] (p. 447). The results also indicated that the three categories of knowledge were in constant interaction in the language classroom. Johnston and Goettsch claim that "although the discrete categories in Shulman's framework of teacher knowledge are useful at a conceptual level and are convenient for analysis, in practice the various forms of teacher knowledge interact in complex ways as teachers go about their work in classrooms" (p. 458). Likewise, Meijer et al. (2001) argue that there is no point in separating knowledge, belief, and related concepts since, in teachers' minds, these psychological constructs are not held or perceived distinctively. This is an aspect which my study explores by focusing not only on discrete experiential and cognitive factors but also on the way these interact and inform each other during grammar teaching.

Borg (2001) explores the effect of KAG on teaching practice by showing how teachers' self-perceptions of their KAG can impact on their pedagogical decisions. Using classroom observations and interviews, Borg compared the perceptions and grammar-related teaching practices of two EFL teachers (Eric, a NS, and Dave, a NNS) with over 15 years of teaching experience each. With respect to Eric, his overall confidence in his KAG led him to adopt an unplanned approach to grammar teaching and to encourage spontaneous grammar work which was always derived from fluency-oriented tasks. When he felt confident about a particular grammatical item, which is what happened most of the time, his typical response to students' grammar questions was to bounce the questions back to the learners and to promote a class discussion. When he felt uncertain, he avoided discussion altogether by providing an immediate answer himself, by deferring the students' question to a later lesson, or by hedging using qualifiers



such as 'usually', or '90 per cent' when formulating grammar rules. The second teacher, Dave, unlike Eric, lacked confidence in his KAG, which was reflected in his minimising grammar teaching and in his avoiding spontaneous grammar discussions. On one occasion when he felt he knew an answer to a grammar question, he provided an immediate answer and, when challenged by a student, he became defensive and changed his typically friendly attitude. The reverse is reported in Pahissa and Tragant (2009), where "Miquel, a teacher with excellent general metalinguistic foundations who lacked confidence in his command of the foreign language [...] focused primarily on grammar as a 'defence mechanism'" (2009: 57). All in all, Borg (2001) is particularly relevant to the present study not only because both share a common focus (exploring KAG in relation to actual teaching practices) but also because Borg's study includes information about a qualified and experienced NNS EFL teacher, like the ones participating in my project.

Andrews and McNeill (2005) examine the TLA (specifically in relation to grammar and vocabulary) of the 'Good Language Teacher'. Through a test, lesson observation, interview, and stimulated recall, Andrews and McNeill collected data from three highly experienced NNS qualified teachers of English who had been classified as 'good' on the basis of their outstanding performance during the teaching practice component of their professional training. Three aspects were the focus of their study: the teachers' declarative knowledge of grammar and vocabulary, the levels of TLA in their pedagogical practice, and the salient characteristics of the TLA of 'Good Language Teachers'. Regarding the first aspect, the teachers' KAG was measured with the 60-item test used in Andrews (1999a). The teachers obtained similar overall scores (71.4%, 72.4%, and 74.3%), which, at first sight, appeared to be reasonably satisfactory. Yet, when comparing these results with those collected from 187 subjects who had no professional qualification and little or no teaching experience (Andrews, 1999c), the former were surprisingly not markedly above the mean scores achieved by the 187 participants, a large number of whom had performed far better than the three experienced teachers. In fact, the three teachers did very well in the correction of errors (mean score between 93.3% and 100%), the recognition of metalanguage (77.7% - 94.4%) and the production of metalanguage (70.8% - 87.5%), but performed poorly in the explanation of errors (36.6% - 46.6%). This seems to be a worrying fact given the relevance of error explanation to

pedagogical practice. With respect to the second aspect in Andrews and McNeill's study, the findings indicated that the three teachers exhibited highly developed levels of TLA in their teaching practice, which was evident, for instance, in their willingness to engage in language work and in their ability to adjust their language to the level of the students. Finally, in relation to the third aspect, the results showed the following characteristics of the TLA of 'good language teachers': "willingness and ability to engage with language-related issues; self-awareness (with particular reference to awareness of the extent of their own subject-matter knowledge) accompanied by a desire for continuing self-improvement of their teacher language awareness; willingness and ability to reflect on language-related issues; awareness of their own key role in mediating input for learning; awareness of learners' potential difficulties; and a love of language" (p. 174). Andrews and McNeill highlight that these features echo the findings of studies of teacher expertise (e.g., Tsui, 2003) and that they are part of teachers' pedagogical content knowledge, a cognition which will be explored in 3.4.

### 3.3.4 Summary

The studies discussed above have each made a valuable contribution to our understanding of subject matter knowledge and, put together, they provide a clear picture of how research in this field has evolved and of what stills needs to be explored. My study aims to advance this understanding of KAG by focusing on aspects which require further examination or which have not yet been explored. For instance, the present project examines participants' *implicit* and *explicit* knowledge about descriptive English grammar, which includes grammatical categories and functions *at* and *above* the sentence level as well as *aspects of formality*. The purpose is also to focus on a larger number of parts of speech which better represents the scope of grammatical structures an EFL teacher has to deal with. In addition, this study centres not only on KAG but also on how this interacts with other cognitions and factors in the classroom. Thus, there is an interest, for instance, in the impact of KAG upon pedagogical practice and in how the influence of CFs affects the application of KAG in actual teaching. In view of the fact that the participants in previous studies have shown serious inadequacies in their KAG in relation to 'explanation of errors', attention will be paid to the nature

of the teachers' explanations of errors both through a grammaticality judgement task and through class observation.

### **3.4 Teacher cognition and GRPK**

The third aspect to be studied in this research project is GRPK, a notion derived from Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK). As described in 3.3.1, PCK is one of the seven categories of teacher knowledge introduced by Shulman and his colleagues in the mid-1980s and defined as "the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction" (Shulman, 1987: 8).

This neat categorisation of the knowledge base of teaching and the distinct nature of PCK were questioned in subsequent studies on teacher knowledge since, though analytically useful, "in reality these categories are melded together in complex and indeed inextricable ways" (Johnston and Goettsch, 2000: 461), which turns categories like PCK into blurred concepts. This has led to further efforts to redefine the knowledge base of teaching, and PCK in particular, so as to show the close and complex interrelationship among the different types of knowledge a teacher possesses. As a result, more recent studies describe PCK as an overarching term encompassing several knowledge bases such as subject matter knowledge, curriculum knowledge, and knowledge of learners (refer to figure 2 to see Andrews' categorisation of PCK).

In line with Shulman's definition of PCK, GRPK will be used in my study to refer to the teachers' knowledge of the instructional strategies (e.g., metaphors, analogies, examples, L1-L2 comparisons, demonstrations) which they use to represent and formulate grammar content in order to make this accessible to the learners. However, in view of the fact that their choice and use of instructional strategies are highly determined by CFs, four other types of knowledge which might help explore and explain the teachers' GRPK will be considered: knowledge of their learners, knowledge of the educational context concerned, knowledge of the syllabus and/or curriculum, and knowledge of the materials they use. As specified in 1.2, attention will be paid to the relationship between GRPK and KAG, though each of these cognitions will also be treated separately.

Extensive research has been done on PCK. Given the complexity of this construct, a more detailed discussion of the nature of PCK will be provided first (section 3.4.1) before analysing the studies concerned with PCK in relation to ELT and grammar teaching (section 3.4.2).

### 3.4.1 The nature of PCK

Section 3.3.1 above discussed the first process of the theoretical framework of pedagogical reasoning and action introduced by Shulman and his colleagues: **comprehension**, which is of high importance when analysing teachers' KAG. The second process of this framework, **transformation**, consists of five different sub-processes: *preparation*, *representation*, *selection*, *adaptation*, and *tailoring*. The first sub-process, *preparation*, involves the critical interpretation and analysis of the instructional materials in terms of the teacher's own understanding of the subject matter. This stage usually includes "(1) detecting and correcting errors of omission and commission in the text [also see Andrews, 1999b, 2007], and (2) the crucial processes of structuring and segmenting the material into forms better adapted to the teacher's understanding and, in prospect, more suitable for teaching" (Shulman, 1987: 16). In the *preparation* stage the teacher resorts to their subject matter knowledge (in the case of grammar, their KAG) and their PCK. The second sub-process, *representation*, entails the identification of alternative ways of representing the content for instruction to the learners, for example, in the form of new analogies, metaphors, illustrations, activities, and examples. The third sub-process, *selection*, has to do with the instructional selection the teacher makes of teaching approaches and strategies, which range from lecture and demonstration to different forms of co-operative learning, Socratic dialogue, and discovery learning. For instance, a teacher teaching grammar may decide to teach a grammatical feature either deductively, inductively, or using a combination of both. The last two processes, *adaptation* and *tailoring*, refer to the fitting of the represented material to the characteristics first of the student population in general and then of specific learners in one class (e.g., conceptions, prior-knowledge, abilities, aptitudes, expectations, motivations, and attention). *Representation*, *selection*, *adaptation*, and *tailoring* are the concern particularly of the teacher's PCK.

The last four processes of the model of pedagogical reasoning and action involve the actual performance of the teacher in the classroom and include:

**instruction**, **evaluation**, **reflection**, and **new comprehension**. The third process in the model, **instruction**, entails the observable teaching practices in the classroom and includes such pedagogical aspects as classroom management, explanations, discussions, responses, and interactions. Shulman claims that “teaching behavior [during instruction] is bound up with comprehension and transformation of understanding” and he illustrates how “the flexible and interactive teaching techniques [Colleen, a teacher in Grossman’s study] uses are simply not available to her when she does not understand the topic to be taught” (ibid.: 18). This means that it is possible to explore a teacher’s PCK and subject matter knowledge through the observation of their classroom performance, which is actually one of the data collection instruments used in my study. The fourth process, **evaluation**, involves the checking of students’ understanding during interactive teaching, the assessment of their performance, and the evaluation of the teacher’s own teaching practices. The fifth process, **reflection**, engages the teacher in the act of “reviewing, reconstructing, re-enacting and critically analysing [their] own and the class’s performance, and grounding explanation in evidence” (ibid.: 15). This process naturally calls for the teacher’s awareness of the instructional strategies they used (PCK) and of their subject matter and resembles the procedures followed in stimulated recall, another instrument to be used in this study. Finally, the sixth process, **new comprehension**, refers to the new understandings of “purposes, subject matter, students, teaching, and self” the teacher achieves and the consolidation of these new understandings (ibid.).

In his review of the historical development of PCK, Hashweh (2005) introduces a new conceptualisation of this construct, which he now calls *Teacher Pedagogical Constructions* and which he describes through seven assertions. First, “PCK represents personal and private knowledge” (p. 274) instead of public and objective awareness. This means PCK can be explored, and thus made public, mostly by means of class observation of individual teachers and by introspective work with them such as through interviews and think-aloud protocols. My study, for instance, explores teachers’ GRPK through class observation and stimulated recall. Second, “PCK is a collection of basic units called teacher pedagogical constructions” (ibid.). Unlike subject matter knowledge, which Hashweh sees as “well organized and hierarchically ordered” (ibid.), PCK is not a single unit but is composed of a set of knowledge entities.

Hence the difficulty in providing a clear-cut definition in the introduction to this section. Third, “teacher pedagogical constructions result mainly from planning, but also from the interactive and post-active phases of teaching” (ibid.). When planning to teach some content, a teacher devises a plan of action which involves drawing on many sources of teacher knowledge (e.g., knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of learners, knowledge of syllabus, and knowledge of pedagogy) to reflect upon and make decisions about certain aspects like how much to teach, what ideas to prioritise and how to introduce them, anticipating and coping with student difficulties, and checking students’ understanding. The teacher then builds pedagogical constructions about the teaching of such content, which can be further developed during interactive teaching and follow-up reflection (e.g., by adding more ways of representing content knowledge to the learners). Therefore, teachers build and accumulate PCK through experience as they teach some content regularly. Not surprisingly, in his doctoral study in 1985, Hashweh found that experienced teachers planned far less than inexperienced teachers since the former were able to recall and draw on pedagogical constructions which the latter had not developed yet. Fourth, “pedagogical constructions result from an inventive process that is influenced by the interaction of knowledge and beliefs from different categories” (ibid.). This means that each new teacher’s pedagogical construction is an original amalgam which the teacher has developed from different teacher knowledge and beliefs categories to teach some particular content. This might explain why there exist some researchers who conceive of PCK as consisting of other types of knowledge while there are some others who see PCK as a separate knowledge category. In my study, as in Hashweh’s conceptualisation, PCK is regarded as an independent construct influenced by other elements of the teacher knowledge base.

Fifth, “pedagogical constructions constitute both a generalised event-based and a story-based kind of memory” (ibid.). Through experience we develop scripts of different aspects of our lives. Just as we have ‘supermarket’ scripts which allow us to understand behaviour and events in supermarkets, teachers develop scripts in relation to the teaching of different topics which will allow them to know, for instance, how to activate learners’ previous knowledge about that topic, how to provide meaningful examples to a particular group of students, and how to use different instructional strategies to represent content knowledge to the learners. All general knowledge about specific events (e.g., teaching passive

voice) is stored in our event-based memory, which is updated every time we have a relevant new experience. This updating process, according to Schank and Abelson (1995), destroys the coherence of any particular sequence of events we may have experienced. However, when something significant occurs (e.g., a funny misunderstanding when teaching passive voice), events are stored in sequence in our story-based memory and are retrieved from memory as a unit. Story-based knowledge is developed by telling the story repeatedly either to oneself or to others. Sixth, “pedagogical constructions are topic specific” (ibid.). Each pedagogical construction is connected in the teacher’s memory structure to a particular topic the teacher uses, which is why PCK and subject matter knowledge have been often related by researchers. Each topic thus becomes a label which helps teachers remember the relevant pedagogical construction they need at a given time. My study explores the teachers’ GRPK, or what Hashweh might call ‘English grammar pedagogical construction’, and its corresponding sub-categories. Finally, “pedagogical constructions are (or should ideally be) labeled in multiple and interesting ways that connect them to other categories and subcategories of teacher knowledge and beliefs” (ibid.). Thus, teachers might be able to access the knowledge stored in their passive voice pedagogical construction (e.g., about specific mistakes students make when using passive voice) by using their knowledge of learners, or, more specifically, their knowledge of learners’ common grammatical errors. Hashweh’s conceptualisation of PCK has been included in this section because it enhances our understanding of not only the nature of PCK as an independent construct but also the way PCK is related to other types of teacher knowledge.

Recent developments in the study of teacher knowledge in the field of mathematics teaching indicate that PCK consists of three types of knowledge: knowledge of content and students, knowledge of content and teaching, and knowledge of content and curriculum (Ball et al., 2008: 402-403). GRPK as understood in the present study focuses on the second type of knowledge, which Ball et al. (2008) exemplify listing the following tasks: “Teachers sequence particular content for instruction. They choose which examples to start with and which examples to use to take students deeper into the content. Teachers evaluate the instructional advantages and disadvantages of representations used to teach a specific idea and identify what different methods and procedures afford instructionally” (ibid.: 401). Though my interest is specifically on knowledge of

content and teaching, as pointed out in 3.4, other knowledge categories which interact with GRPK like knowledge of learners, knowledge of syllabus/curriculum, and knowledge of context will be explored.

### 3.4.2 PCK in relation to ELT and grammar teaching

Ten years after the introduction of PCK, Andrews (1997) explored 14 EFL teachers' declarative and procedural dimensions of their metalinguistic awareness by means of their grammatical explanations. Each teacher was asked to role-play a grammatical explanation in an imaginary context (the teacher providing feedback to a class of Form 3 students on mistakes derived from their compositions) following specific task instructions (identifying parts of an extract which require clarification and providing an explanation). Andrews reports on the corrective feedback provided by 4 (2 prospective and 2 practising) of the 14 teachers participating in the study. The author identified a number of *issues* concerning procedural metalinguistic awareness (p. 159): 1. "Focus on form or meaning": he found that 3 of the 4 teachers centred their attention on surface form without connecting the different forms to the message the writer was trying to convey. 2. "Focus on text or sentence": the same 3 teachers appeared to have a sentence-based view of grammar and did not consider inter-sentential relationships. 3. "Error gravity and prioritisation for treatment": the same 3 teachers corrected mistakes sentence by sentence without discriminating among these mistakes. 4. "The nature of the corrective feedback": these 3 teachers made some unnecessary amendments and created sentences which were, in most cases, grammatically correct if treated in isolation but incoherent when looking at the whole text; their corrective feedback centred on the specific cases in the text provided and were not linked to generalisations about language; and, in general, their explanations were either unclear or misleading. The fourth remaining teacher identified the faulty parts in the text and made a correction which was syntactically accurate and textually coherent, and attempted to provide corrective feedback which would help students make generalisations about grammar. Her approach to providing feedback was thorough since she outlined all the possible meanings which may be conveyed by the use of the structure being corrected. 5. "Taking account of the students": for instance, there was the case of one of the teachers who made use of metalanguage which was accurate but possibly incomprehensible to the learners specified in the context provided.



There was no intention on the part of the teachers to activate the learners' previous knowledge, probably because there were no students present during the role-play.

The main drawback of this study lies in the fact that the corrective feedback was provided under artificial conditions. Though a context was outlined, the performances were not affected by any CFs typical of classroom situations such as students' intervention and time constraints, which means that the teacher behaviour observed by Andrews may not necessarily reflect what would actually happen if the corrective feedback were provided under real classroom conditions. However, the study has cast light on significant aspects of the declarative and procedural dimensions of teachers' metalinguistic awareness such as the five issues described above and, more importantly, the way these two dimensions (in my study referred to as KAG and GRPK) interrelate. In addition, as Andrews highlights in his conclusion, exclusive attention to the declarative dimension is not sufficient to assess teachers' metalinguistic awareness and, therefore, equal importance should be given to teachers' declarative and procedural knowledge when exploring their teaching practices. In subsequent studies, Andrews further examines the interaction between these two dimensions but with reference to real teaching practices (see Andrews, 1999b, 2001, 2006 in 3.3.2).

Two subsequent studies have discussed PCK in relation to actual ESL/EFL grammar teaching practices (Borg, 2001; Johnston and Goettsch, 2000). Johnston and Goettsch (2000) explored four experienced ESL grammar teachers' content knowledge (already discussed in 3.3.3), PCK, and knowledge of learners by observing these teachers' classroom grammar explanations and by interviewing them about the nature of such explanations. Immediately relevant to this section are the findings reported in relation to the second type of knowledge, PCK. Johnston and Goettsch claim that "the way experienced teachers give explanations of grammar points in class [...] is pedagogical content knowledge par excellence" and that it is through grammar explanations that "content knowledge [...] finds its pedagogical realization" (p. 449). After analysing teachers' perceptions on the nature of good explanations, the authors described the main qualities which characterise good explanations: a. though not avoided altogether, giving rules does not feature heavily in good explanations; instead, grammatical rules are often discovered by the learners themselves; b. examples play a key role in these explanations (both examples provided by the teacher and

those elicited from the students); c. student input (e.g., their giving examples, searching for content materials, and analysing language items by themselves) helps facilitate teachers' explanations; d. the extent to which metalanguage is used depends mainly on the level of the course (the higher the level, the more appropriate it seems to use metalanguage); and e. active student engagement is desirable and can be achieved by encouraging learners to ask questions and to take part in student-initiated discussions. The teachers also highlight that providing good examples is not an easy task and that, though it could start to be developed in TTCs, the ability to produce good examples is, in reality, usually acquired from experience along the years. Equally difficult is the immediate adjudication of students' sample sentences, which involves not only ruling whether a sentence is grammatically correct but also determining what aspects may be wrong with it and how to provide satisfactory explanations. Johnston and Goettsch conclude their study acknowledging the complexity of the knowledge base of teaching and claiming that, although it is possible and analytically convenient to identify different categories of this knowledge base, "in practice the various forms of teacher knowledge interact in complex ways as teachers go about their work in classrooms" (p. 458). Johnston and Goettsch (2000) is highly relevant to my research project, not only because both studies share a similar focus of study (GRPK and KAG in connection with actual teaching practices) and profile of participants (experienced teachers) but also because they seek to examine the way different types of teacher knowledge interact during grammar-related instructional practices.

In addition to providing details of two teachers' (Eric and Dave) self-perceptions of their KAG (see 3.3.3), Borg (2001) related Eric's and Dave's self-perceived KAG to their PCK, claiming that "Eric's confidence was accompanied by a well-developed variety of instructional strategies for grammar work, which he applied skilfully; Dave's lack of confidence was accompanied by a limited instructional repertoire for grammar work, which he applied less successfully" (p. 27). Borg explains that, in Dave's case, his teaching practices revealed a sound PCK in relation to the teaching of vocabulary, reading, and writing, which suggests that, within one discipline, a person may develop expertise in some areas and not in others (also see Andrews, 2006 and Tsui, 2003). He adds that Dave may not have developed expertise in grammar because of the lack of ongoing experience teaching grammar. In contrast, Eric's confidence and his

willingness to conduct impromptu grammar work when necessary had led him to gain experience teaching grammar and to develop his grammar-related PCK. These findings are significant to my study since one of its foci is precisely to explore the interaction between the teachers' KAG and GRPK in real grammar teaching practices.

### **3.4.3 Summary**

This section provides a discussion of all the research on PCK which, to my understanding, bears some relevance to my study. Reference has been made to this construct in general and, more specifically, in relation to ELT and grammar teaching. As a result, the discussion of the different studies has cast light on the nature of PCK, its complexity, and the way it interacts with other teacher knowledge categories. Part of the contribution this research project aims to make entails the study of GRPK both as an independent construct and as it relates to other teacher knowledge categories.

### **3.5 Further studies on EFL/ESL grammar teaching practices**

In addition to the research discussed above, there are some studies which provide further insight into the nature of EFL/ESL grammar teaching practices and teachers' pedagogical knowledge. Unlike the specific focus of PCK on instructional techniques (i.e. the organisation, representation, adaptation, and presentation of content), pedagogical knowledge is a more encompassing construct, concerned with "the teacher's accumulated knowledge about the teaching act (e.g., its goals, procedures, strategies) that serves as the basis for his or her classroom behaviour and activities" (Gatbonton, 1999: 35).

Through the use of video-based stimulated recall, Gatbonton (1999) explored 7 experienced ESL teachers' interactive instructional thoughts. She identified between 20 and 21 categories of pedagogical thoughts, from which she derived six pedagogical knowledge domains which operate when experienced ESL teachers teach and which guide their language teaching practices: "a. knowledge of how to manage specific language items so students can learn them (Handling Language Items), b. knowledge about students and what they bring into the classroom (Factoring in Student Contributions), c. knowledge about the goals and subject matter of teaching (Determining the Contents of Teaching), d. knowledge about techniques and procedures (Facilitating the Instructional Flow),

e. knowledge about appropriate student-teacher relationships (Building Rapport), and f. knowledge about evaluating student task involvement and progress during lessons (Monitoring Student Progress)” (p. 42). The specific examples that Gatbonton provides in relation to the first three domains bear direct relevance to two of the cognitions explored in my study, GRPK and KAG. For instance, *Handling Language Items* includes such considerations as explaining language aspects and giving examples, deciding how much language to cover and when, making comprehensible input available to the learners, and highlighting and fine tuning such input (GRPK). *Factoring in Student Contributions* refers specifically to the teachers’ knowledge of the learners such as their personalities, personal and language backgrounds, motivations and needs, attitudes and reactions, and learning styles (GRPK). Finally, *Determining the Contents of Teaching* involves the teacher’s awareness of not only the teaching goals (e.g., language points) of a class/lesson but also of the specific instructional activities to be used to teach certain language items (GRPK and KAG). Though Gatbonton’s study introduces categories which appear to be too broad (they encompass many aspects of teachers’ pedagogical knowledge and refer to L2 teaching in general) and provides examples which could well fit into more than one category, it no doubt deepens our understanding of the complex nature of pedagogical knowledge and of the teaching aspects which coexist with a teacher’s GRPK and KAG.

In a more recent study, Gatbonton (2008) examined the pedagogical knowledge of four ESL novice teachers and compared the findings with those in her 1999 project. To her surprise, the results revealed that 20 of the original 21 pedagogical knowledge categories found in experienced teachers’ data were also present in the data provided by the novices, and that the dominant categories in both groups of teachers were similar, though in a different rank order. The study did not reveal, however, how these inexperienced teachers may have developed their pedagogical knowledge. Apart from their short teacher training and limited teaching experience, Gatbonton raised the possibility that their source of pedagogical knowledge may have been their PLLEs. This idea of a pre-existing pedagogical knowledge base is also reported by Abell (2008) with reference to her pre-service science student teachers:

Although my students lacked various types of knowledge, they certainly were not blank slates. They had developed general scripts for teaching (part of what Shulman

termed pedagogical knowledge) based on (or sometimes in reaction to) long years in the apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975) and were often limited by views of teaching and learning suggested by these scripts. (Abell, 2008: 1405-1406)

The major differences between novice and experienced teachers in Gatbonton (2008) were found in the details within each pedagogical knowledge category. For instance, in the 'Note student behaviour and reactions' category, whereas experienced teachers were more focused on overall classroom behaviour and positive attitudes to classroom events, novice teachers were more concerned for noting students' negative conduct and reactions. Another important difference lies in the fact that the categories present in the novice teachers' data referred to "passive observation skills" (e.g., "noting that students produced language") and the categories missing in their accounts were those involving an "active" dimension (e.g., "monitoring classroom tasks") (pp. 171, 175). This may be because their source of pedagogical knowledge has been mostly observation (e.g., during PLLEs) and not their own teaching experience. This study appears to be relevant to my research project because, though focusing on novice teachers, it helps validate the categories of pedagogical thoughts derived from experienced teachers' data in Gatbonton (1999).

Immediately relevant to my research project and the study of teachers' actual grammar teaching practices are Borg (1998a, 1998b, 1999a, 2005) and Borg and Burns (2008). Using a pre-observation interview and stimulated recall, Borg (1998a) explored the personal pedagogical systems of an experienced (over 15 years of teaching experience) and highly qualified (both certificate and diploma in TEFL) NS teacher teaching EFL to a group of adult students in Malta, and describes the way these systems give shape to this teacher's grammar-related instructional decisions. The data collected are grouped in relation to different features of the teacher's grammar teaching practices. First, the teacher undertook grammar work based on the *analysis of students' mistakes*, mainly because this kind of grammar work was relevant to the learners, which validated a language focus in the classroom, and, since it was based on mistakes derived from fluency activities, error analysis of this nature also justified the teacher's focus on fluency throughout the course. In addition, the inclusion of error analysis was meant to meet any expectations the students may have held about formal language teaching during the course, and, due to the inductive nature of this type of grammar work, to challenge them cognitively as well as to heighten their sense

of achievement. These thinking tasks on grammatical issues also had an impact on the teacher's classroom management since they allowed him to vary the pace of his lessons. Second, the teacher encouraged students to make *reference to their L1*, a learning strategy which he justified claiming that it had worked well for him as a language learner and as a language teacher. Third, the teacher seemed to have a positive attitude towards the students' development of *grammatical terminology* since "it provided an economical and shared means of communication about language, it facilitated diagnostic work, and it equipped the students to function more competently as autonomous investigators of language" (pp. 20-21). Yet the teacher decided to overlook this aspect in some situations when he perceived the use of grammatical labels could affect the learners' cognitive or affective state. Fourth, the teacher favoured an *inductive approach to grammar* in which the teacher elicited grammar rules from the learners through an interactive class discussion. Only when the students were unable to discover rules by themselves did the teacher adopt a deductive treatment of grammatical items. Like in the case of grammatical metalanguage, if the teacher perceived the learners were unable to cope with the complexity of grammatical rules as presented in grammar books, he provided 'user-friendly' or simplified versions of such rules. All this grammar work was basically unplanned, which means that language points were focused on as they emerged in the classroom. Finally, the teacher included *grammar practice* which bore the following characteristics: a. it took place after grammar discussions and once some grammar rule had been formulated, b. it engaged students in oral, not written, work, c. it gave learners some freedom as regards the content they talked about, and d. it centred on issues which the teacher thought were meaningful to the learners. In addition to this student-centred and meaning-oriented grammar practice, the teacher sometimes included more traditional activities which he had found effective and enjoyable as a language learner and which he thought attended to the needs of students with different learning styles and helped vary the pace of his lessons. With reference to this teacher, Borg claims that "a central feature of his development as a teacher was the formation of a personal pedagogy in which aspects of traditionally exclusive approaches to L2 teaching coexisted and were drawn upon according to his perceptions of the demands of specific instructional contexts" (p. 26). All in all, the redefinition of this teacher's beliefs about grammar teaching and the mainly inductive and student-centred approach to grammar

teaching this teacher adopted, along with the informed use of more traditional methods, had been shaped not only by the professional training he had received during his career but also by his ongoing classroom experience.

Borg (1998a) is immediately relevant to my study since both share important paradigmatic (exploratory-interpretive) and methodological features and have a common research focus (EFL grammar teaching). Borg's study, for instance, has served as an example of how to carry out stimulated recall with a focus on the reasons behind and interpretations of certain classroom behaviour and decisions, and has provided valuable information about the classroom events which might serve as the basis for discussion in the stimulated-recall sessions. However, these studies differ in some respects. For example, whereas Borg (1998a) is concerned with a teacher's pedagogical system on the whole and, therefore, includes general information about a variety of aspects such as beliefs, previous language learning and teaching experiences, decision-making, and teaching strategies, my research project focuses specifically on three distinct experiential (PLLEs) and cognitive (KAG and GRPK) factors and, moreover, the relationship among them. Additionally, more data collection instruments are used in my study such as a grammaticality judgement task and autobiographical accounts, which might eventually serve as further evidence of how to examine cognitive processes. Further differences include the type of participants (NNS EFL teachers) and the context explored (a monolingual EFL class at a state secondary school).

The grammar teaching practices of the teacher in Borg (1998a), whom the author now calls Eric, together with those of a less qualified (certificate level) and much less experienced (3 years of teaching experience) NS teacher called Martha, are described in Borg (1998b). This study (see description of paradigmatic and methodological features above in Borg, 1998a) focuses on these two teachers' metatalk (defined as "explicit talk about grammar", p. 159) and illustrates the methodological, psychological and experiential factors which give shape to the role metatalk plays in these teachers' classroom work. Even though Martha and Eric were both advocates of a communicative approach to L2 teaching and their teaching was characterised by fluency-oriented instructional tasks, their methodology differed in a number of ways. First, Martha's lessons were structured following the presentation-practice-production model in which accuracy work gradually led to fluency work. There were clearly demarcated

accuracy (presentation-practice) and fluency (production) zones, and metatalk was restricted to the stages centring on accuracy. The focus of metatalk was planned before the lesson and always specified in the instructional materials. In Eric's lessons, on the other hand, grammar work was always unplanned and emerged interactively during fluency work at any time of the lesson. The focus of metatalk was determined either by the learners or by the teacher on the basis of what he perceived were the students' linguistic needs. During grammar work, although both teachers favoured an inductive approach to grammar teaching, there were marked methodological differences between them. Whereas in Martha's lessons small group metatalk was never encouraged, the use of grammatical terminology was minimised and simplified wherever possible, and L1-L2 comparisons were avoided, Eric's work was characterised by small group grammar discussions which the teacher saw as an opportunity for the students to engage in spontaneous interaction, by the promotion of metatalk and use of metalanguage if either metatalk or metalanguage did not threaten the learners, and by the use of L1-L2 comparisons. Furthermore, possibly as a result of the respective unplanned or planned nature of Eric's and Martha's approaches to grammar work, metatalk in Eric's work culminated in fuzzy rules about grammar while in Martha's case there was less evidence of such fuzziness and rules were expressed with a greater sense of certainty.

In addition to the methodological rationale behind the approaches of metatalk adopted by these teachers, there were important psychological and experiential factors determining the role of metatalk in these teachers' work. At a psychological level, for instance, Eric's decision to adopt an unplanned approach to metatalk reflected his confidence in his ability to conduct impromptu grammar work. Likewise, Eric's tolerance of uncertainty and his readiness to admit not having an answer in front of the students might explain his decision to welcome opportunities for spontaneous metatalk and to encourage discussions which may lead to fuzzy outcomes about grammar. In Martha's case, on the other hand, her decision to plan metatalk revealed a possible lower level of confidence in her ability to cope with spontaneous grammar work and a potential lack of tolerance of uncertainty and an unwillingness to disclose lack of knowledge in front of the learners. With reference to experiential factors, both the teachers' classroom experience and their own PLLEs accounted, to a large extent, for their



methodological orientation and the nature of their approach to metatalk (see discussion of Borg 1998a above and of Borg 1999a in 3.2.3).

In his conclusion, Borg acknowledges Faerch's claim that "meta talk in the FL classroom is by no means a monolithic phenomenon" (Faerch, 1985, cited in Borg, 1998b: 172). Borg provides evidence to support this assertion by describing the interacting methodological, psychological and experiential factors which shape the role metatalk plays in Eric's and Martha's work. My study further explores these factors, also in relation to actual teaching practices, but within the framework of the teachers' PLLEs, KAG, and GRPK and considering other interacting factors such as CFs. Other differences between Borg (1998b) and my study include methodological aspects and context-related issues which have already been described in relation to Borg (1998a).

Teachers' perspectives on their grammar teaching practices are also explored in Borg, S. (2005). Using the same paradigmatic orientation and data collection instruments as in Borg (1998a, 1998b, 2001), the author examined two teachers' (Zsanna and Dave) KAL (in this case, their attitudes towards and knowledge about grammar), specifically "the nature of their KAL, influences on its development, and its impact on their grammar teaching practices" (p. 326). The latter is the most relevant aspect to the present study and is the one to be described here. Both teachers were fully qualified, experienced (14 and 16 years of teaching experience), and NNS. Zsanna taught EFL to a group of 8-15 14-year-old secondary school students. Typical characteristics of her approach to grammar teaching included strategies which she had found effective for the development of her own KAL (example of how her PLLEs informed her pedagogical knowledge) or which she derived from her own classroom experiences. First, she favoured explicit grammar work based on the analysis of grammatical items. Though at first she attempted to adopt a communicative approach where grammar teaching was neglected, she then realised that an explicit attention to language was beneficial for the learners, especially in areas she had found particularly hard to learn herself (e.g., structures which contrasted with the learners' L1). This means that her own PLLEs were not only informing her pedagogical principles but also helping her to anticipate potential areas of difficulty. Zsanna claims that having gone through the process of learning the foreign language one is trying to teach represents an advantage NNS language teachers have over their NS counterparts. Second, Zsanna's PLLEs, which had

been markedly based on independent discovery learning, naturally had an impact on the selection of tasks she engaged her students in. These included brainstorming group activities to activate the learners' previous knowledge and to generate their own questions for research, and group discussions to analyse and classify grammatical features and for the learners to create their own examples. The learner-centred nature of her instructional tasks was consistent with the teaching role she preferred to adopt, that of a 'conductor' who stayed preferably in the background. Finally, Zsanna always promoted open discussions, even about grammatical issues she was unsure of and which could result in situations that might make her look vulnerable. She enjoyed the unpredictability and challenge of this type of discussions and the opportunities they generated for the continuing development of her own KAL.

Dave's case has already been discussed in Borg (2001) above and in 3.3.3. He taught EFL to a group of 6-10 adult students. His approach to grammar teaching was characterised by three main features: "the use of planned rather than spontaneous activities; identifying grammar content on the basis of students' requests; and promoting inductive, metalinguistically explicit grammar analysis" (p. 336). The shaping of this approach was probably the result of a combination of several factors. Firstly, he had negative memories of the grammar-based lessons he had attended at secondary school (negative PLLEs). Secondly, he believed his first teacher training experiences had made no contributions to the development of his KAL. Thirdly, though his early teaching experiences involved the use of traditional grammar-based instructional techniques, his current approach was largely influenced by a TTC (Diploma) he had taken later in his career (1980s), which had led him to develop strong communicative perspectives about language teaching and where grammar work was kept to a minimum and made as implicit as possible. This training experience appears to explain his tendency to minimise grammar teaching and to carry out inductive grammar work, but does not coincide with the explicit analysis of grammatical items Dave promoted in his classes. He justified the explicit nature of his grammar work claiming that it was in line with the logical way adult learners organised knowledge. Finally, his educational and professional background had naturally affected the development of Dave's explicit KAL and his own perception of it, which had resulted in a distinct lack of confidence in his KAL and in the limitations of his instructional repertoire for grammar work.

Borg, S. (2005) is particularly significant to my study at a methodological level. It has informed the design and application of shared data collection instruments. In addition, it explores the perspectives on teaching practices of teachers with a similar profile: qualified, experienced non-native speakers teaching EFL. In the case of Zsanna, the fieldwork was conducted in a relevant context: EFL classes with a small group of adolescents at a secondary school. Finally, Borg's case studies disclose information not only about the teachers' KAG, PLLEs, and pedagogical knowledge, but also about the way these, in combination, shape grammar teaching practices.

Using survey data collected from 176 teachers of English to adults from 18 different countries, Borg and Burns (2008) shed further light on the nature of grammar instruction, more specifically on the conceptualisation of the integration of grammar in teaching practices and the sources of evidence teachers cite to justify their positions. A significant finding indicates that almost all the respondents, the majority of whom were highly qualified teachers, did not teach grammar in isolation but integrated it with other aspects of their teaching. Their conceptions of integration can be grouped into two different but complementary perspectives on integration which Borg and Burns call *contextual* and *temporal*. The contextual perspective defines integration with reference to "the relationship between grammar work and the text or task it [is] related to" and includes "notions of integration which refer to context generically [grammatical items are presented and practised in meaningful contexts], involve deriving grammar from texts [grammar integration is text-driven, which means that texts are selected first on the basis of the themes and skills the teacher intends to work on and that the grammatical features to focus on emerge in response to these texts], use texts purposefully to present grammar [grammar integration is form-driven, that is, the grammatical points the teacher wants to cover determine the choice of text], and define grammar work in relation to the goals of communicative tasks [grammar integration is task-driven, in other words, grammar work is determined with reference to the requirements of specific communicative tasks]" (pp. 471, 478). The temporal perspective describes integration with regard to "when, chronologically, grammar and skills work [occur] in relation to one another"; therefore, "grammar may precede [grammar work is used as a preparation for skills work], follow [grammar work takes place after skills work], or occur during

work with a skills focus [a grammar focus is derived from students' errors, questions, or difficulties which come up during skills work]" (ibid.).

Regarding the sources of evidence which account for the effectiveness of an integrated approach to grammar teaching, the respondents specified the following aspects: 1- it enables learners to "communicate effectively, using grammar correctly and appropriately in the process", 2- it helps improve "students' use and explicit knowledge of language" (for instance, learners are able to monitor and correct their own output and that of others), 3- it has a positive impact on "students' attitudes and motivation" (for example, it enhances their confidence in using English, and increases their participation and level of interest), 4- in their feedback, learners indicate their satisfaction with this type of approach to grammar teaching, and 5- it improves the learners' performance in tests and assignments (pp. 473-475). In addition to these main sources, a smaller number of teachers mentioned their accumulated positive teaching experience using this type of approach, their negative experience teaching grammar in isolation, their own positive language learning experiences using this approach, and their intuitive feeling that an integrated approach works. It is worth highlighting that these sources of evidence were mostly practical and experiential in nature rather than theoretical or derived from received knowledge, which, according to Borg and Burns, "is further evidence that teachers make sense of their work largely in relation to experiential and practical knowledge" and that "formal theory does not play a prominent and direct role in shaping teachers' explicit rationales for their work" (p. 479).

This survey-based study has two major limitations which may affect its relevance to the context of my research project. First, as Borg and Burns acknowledge, the findings reported in this article are not based on classroom observation but, rather, on "teachers' stated beliefs and their reported classroom practices" (p. 480). Hence, there is the risk that the forms of grammar integration and sources of evidence which teachers report do not coincide with what actually takes place in their classrooms and that their orientations are influenced by what is perceived to be methodologically acceptable. This is closely related to the notion of *social desirability/prestige bias*: "respondents can have a fairly good guess about what the desirable/acceptable/expected answer is, and some of them will provide this response even if it is not true" (Dörnyei, 2003: 12). Second, the respondents were all teachers of adult students and, therefore, their perceptions

based on classroom experiences with adults may not be immediately relevant to other classroom realities such as secondary school classes with adolescents, as is the case of the present study. However, these limitations do not undermine the fact that Borg and Burns's research has helped increase our understanding not only of the different ways of integrating grammar work and of the value teachers attach to this kind of approach but also of the types of knowledge (experiential and practical) which might shape teachers' classroom practices. This will certainly inform the observation of grammar-related events in this study.

Finally, highly relevant to the present study is Pahissa and Tragant (2009), discussed partially in 3.2.2. Using general interviews, 'prompted' interviews, and audio-taped writing conferences (teachers providing one-to-one feedback on students' writings), the authors explored the metatalk and underlying beliefs of three experienced NNS teachers teaching EFL at state secondary schools in Spain, and the experiential, cognitive, and contextual factors associated with their grammar work and beliefs. Emma favoured grammar teaching and her metatalk was characterised by the use of grammatical terminology and a variety of pedagogical techniques such as L1-L2 comparison, translation, structure analysis, elicitation, metaphors, and word-association techniques. She justified the use of L1-L2 comparison and translation claiming that they offered a "shortcut to avoid tiresome metatalk" and "the shortest path to her student's mind" (pp. 51-52). She also believed she was able to simplify her explanations depending on the learners' level and to provide "rules of thumb" and "practical tips" (p. 51). Joel, a supporter of communicative L2 approaches, held an anti-grammar stance and, accordingly, minimised grammar work as much as possible. During writing conferences, he used translation to check meaning, gave brief grammar explanations, avoided grammatical terminology, and offered no categorical rules or corrections. Finally, Miquel, like Emma, made extensive use of metatalk, grammatical terminology, structure analysis, L1-L2 comparison, and translation. He also advocated the use of short and simple rules, including rules of thumb, to help students solve L2 problems. Pahissa and Tragant found close associations among these teachers' approach to metatalk, their PLLEs, and CFs (see 3.2.2). In the case of Miquel, whose lack of confidence in his KAG appeared to lead him to emphasise grammar work as a "defence mechanism" (see 3.2.2), there was evidence of how his perception of his KAG informed his pedagogical actions. Along with a few other studies (e.g., Borg, 1998a, 1998b, 2001, 2005), Pahissa and Tragant (2009)

disclose some information about the relationship among different interacting factors and teachers' instructional practices. However, due to the design of this study, the findings are based largely on teachers' accounts and do not relate directly to their actual classroom practices. Thus, the complex, dynamic, and multidirectional interaction among experiential, cognitive, and contextual factors in real teaching practices is not reflected, which is a gap that the present research project intends to fill.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter has been two-fold: to review the main contributions of previous language teacher research on PLLEs, KAG, GRPK, and grammar teaching and pedagogical knowledge; and to identify the conceptual, methodological, and contextual gaps which my study aims to address. Having provided the conceptual basis for this research work, I move on to discuss its methodological foundations.

## CHAPTER IV RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Type of research: Qualitative

#### 4.1.1 Definition and rationale

Many researchers have engaged in the difficult task of advancing a precise definition of qualitative research and have been able, in the eyes of qualitative practitioners, to describe this approach only partially. This is mainly due to the overarching and ever-changing nature of qualitative research, comprising a wide array of traditions and methods and adjusting to the demands of emerging worldviews ranging from social constructivism to pragmatism. Denzin and Lincoln provide a definition which includes the basic tenets of qualitative research:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including fieldnotes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (2005: 3)

Key defining qualities in this definition about which there seems to be a wide consensus among researchers are: an interpretive and naturalistic character, the use of a series of methods or representations, and a concern with understanding the meanings which the people involved in the research bring to the phenomena.

Several reasons motivated the adoption of a qualitative approach in this study. Given the exploratory and naturalistic aims of this research project and the type of questions and issues it intended to address, it seemed only natural to approach the study of the participants' grammar teaching practices and the interacting experiential, cognitive, and contextual factors which give shape to them from a qualitative point of view. A qualitative approach potentially allowed me to explore the aspects under study in their full complexity and, therefore, to reach an understanding of their unique nature. This was made possible only by studying teachers in their natural contexts (i.e. their school setting and classrooms) and by spending many hours with them in the field. It was also

necessary to empower them to share their viewpoints so that we could hear their voices directly. This required the use of specific and multiple sources of data such as autobiographical accounts, in-depth interviews, and stimulated recall, which helped me to appreciate and to gain different perspectives on the issues. A more comprehensive analysis of the qualitative approach adopted in my study will be provided in the description of its methodological, ontological and epistemological stances as well as the functions it was set to serve.

#### **4.1.2 Methodological stances**

The discussion of the methodological stances which were adopted in this research project and which are naturally associated with qualitative research is based on the characteristics delineated by Snape and Spencer (2003) and by Creswell (2007), who, in turn, draws on the work of Hatch (2002), LeCompte and Schensul (1999), and Marshall and Rossman (2006).

- **Role and perspective of the researcher and the researched:** I adopted an 'emic' perspective, which means that I sought to establish an insider's perspective on the issues being explored. The participants and I were in close contact over a period of eight months and interacted face-to-face during the first and second semi-structured interviews, the observations, and the stimulated recall sessions. The purpose of using these methods, the teachers' journals, and their autobiographical accounts was to learn about their professional and academic histories and to hear the rationale behind their teaching actions, their interpretations of classroom experiences, their personal and professional reflections, and, in general, the meaning(s) which they assigned to their instructional grammar practices. I adopted a non-judgemental stance during the whole study, since my purpose was not to judge the teachers' practices but to understand and interpret their perspectives on them.
- **Nature of research design:** First, observations were made at the site where the teachers' grammar teaching practices took place (i.e. their classrooms) in order to capture *naturally occurring data*, though the study also included other methods which collected *generated data* (see 4.3). Second, a flexible research strategy was adopted, which means that I was willing to change my initial plans for research once I entered the field and began to collect the data. This was



reflected, for instance, in my readiness to change the language in which the stimulated recall sessions and final interview were held when both teachers expressed they felt more comfortable speaking in English rather than in Spanish; and in my decision to include some overall questions at the end of some stimulated recall interviews when I saw that the participants did not write much in their diaries either because of lack of time or because they forgot to do so. Additionally, many changes were made in the observation and follow-up interview schedules due to strikes, teacher absenteeism, or teachers' unavailability.

- **Nature of data generation and the research methods used:** Firstly, I became an important instrument in the data collection process and, instead of relying on questionnaires or instruments developed, and often administered, by others, I gathered the information myself, for instance, by observing classroom teaching behaviour and actions and by interviewing the participants. Secondly, I used methods of data collection which were flexible (e.g., *semi-structured* interviews), interactive (e.g., stimulated recall), and sensitive to the setting in which the data were gathered (e.g., *non-participant* observation). Finally, I employed multiple methods, which allowed me to explore the aspects under study from different angles and to collect extensive and information-rich data which were then reduced to a few categories that cut across all the data sources.

- **Nature of analysis:** First, the methods of analysis (thematic analysis, codification, and categorisation) and explanation (detailed description and interpretation) employed reflected the complexity and context of the data. Quotes from the participants were included in the descriptions, which allows readers to hear the teachers' voices and perspectives directly from them. Second, though the material was first linked mostly to pre-conceived themes which had been derived from the research questions, the codes and categories within each theme were derived from the data themselves and not imposed from the literature. Third, each teacher was treated as a unique case. Only when each had been studied and described individually was cross-case analysis conducted. Fourth, the meanings the participants expressed were always interpreted with reference to their context of occurrence. Finally, explanations were never meant to provide cause-and-effect relationships but to facilitate the understanding of the rationale

behind teaching actions and behaviour. See 9.2 to read some of the limitations of the study in relation to data analysis.

- **Nature of outputs:** Detailed descriptions and interpretations which were based on the perspectives of the participants were produced. My ultimate intention was to provide not only a detailed account of each of the aspects under study (grammar teaching practices, PLLEs, KAG, GRPK, and CFs) but also a holistic picture which showed how these experiential, cognitive, and contextual factors interact and help define each teacher's grammar teaching practices.

#### **4.1.3 Ontological and epistemological stances**

Ontology addresses philosophical issues about the nature of reality and what can be known about it. Key ontological questions within social research include "whether or not social reality exists independently of human conceptions and interpretations; whether there is a common, shared, social reality or just multiple context-specific realities; and whether or not social behaviour is governed by 'laws' that can be seen as immutable or generalisable" (Snape and Spencer, 2003: 11). Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the researcher and the researched. Epistemological questions the researcher addresses are "how can we know about reality and what is the basis of our knowledge?" (ibid.: 13)

In terms of ontological stance, I adhere most closely to a variant of idealism called 'relativism'. That is, I believe there exists no single shared social reality independently of our individual subjective understanding, and that reality is only accessible to us through socially constructed meanings (Richards, 2003; Snape and Spencer, 2003). In my study, this is reflected in the emphasis it places on the participants' interpretations of their own reality, which are then further interpreted by me (*double hermeneutic*). During the study, both the participants and I embrace multiple realities, evidence of which is the use of quotes based on the teachers' actual words and the explicit interpretation that I make of these in the description of the findings (see Chapters V and VI). The teachers' social reality is constructed, therefore, by all the individuals involved in the study.

With reference to epistemology, I can be said to adopt a 'subjectivist' stance. I believe that the researcher and the social world impact on each other and, therefore, the latter cannot be seen as independent of or unaffected by the

former. The relationship between the researcher and the participants is interactive, and, as explained above, only out of this interaction is knowledge constructed. In the context of my study, the teachers constructed meaning of their grammar teaching practices through their interaction with me (e.g., during interviews and stimulated recall sessions), my main objective being to understand the teachers' rationale for their actions and their perspectives on the issues and then to interpret them. These interpretations, inevitably influenced by my own perspectives and values, were value-laden, and the ultimate findings, mediated by me as well, were value-mediated. As a result, I did not produce an objective and value-free representation of the social reality I was in contact with but rather a subjective account of a socially constructed reality.

These ontological and epistemological stances are in line with the tenets of 'social constructivism'. The social actors, in their interaction with the researcher, develop subjective and multiple meanings of their experiences, which allows the latter to explore the aspects under study in their full complexity. There is also a focus on understanding the context in which the participants' actions take place. Finally, the researcher intends to make sense of the perspectives others have of the world and, in doing so, he/she recognises that his/her interpretations are shaped by his/her own values, viewpoints, and background. Richards claims that constructivism is "a view holding firmly to the position that knowledge and truth are created rather than discovered and that reality is pluralistic", and then adds that "constructivists seek to understand not the essence of a real world but the richness of a world that is socially determined" (2003: 39). These two quotes comprise, in a few words, the ontological and epistemological positions which I adopted.

#### **4.1.4 Functions of qualitative research**

Qualitative research projects can be claimed to serve one or a combination of four different functions: "*contextual* – describing the form or nature of what exists; *explanatory* – examining the reasons for, or associations between, what exists; *evaluative* – appraising the effectiveness of what exists; [and] *generative* – aiding the development of theories, strategies or actions" [emphasis added] (Ritchie, 2003: 27). The present study intends to fulfil two main functions: contextual and explanatory.

The contextual role of this project is manifest in its objective to describe in fine-tuned detail the nature of the teachers' grammar teaching practices and the meaning they attach to grammar instruction not only in the particular context under study but also in their ELT practices in general. It could also be argued that there is a contextual function in the description of the participants' PLLEs, KAG, GRPK, and the CFs which interact with their grammar practices. This role represents the descriptive or exploratory side of the study.

The explanatory purpose of this project is evident in its aim to study the rationale of and the experiential, cognitive, and contextual factors underlying the teachers' instructional grammar practices, as well as the context in which these factors and practices take place. The focus is specifically on examining how the four aforesaid aspects are associated with the teachers' grammar teaching actions in their particular classroom context. As specified above, though there may be some causal links in the report of the findings, the emphasis is not on finding cause-and-effect relationships among the aspects under study but on understanding their particular nature in the classroom context being explored and on identifying the way they interact to give shape to teachers' grammar teaching.

## **4.2 Research tradition: Case study**

### **4.2.1 Definition and rationale**

More than 25 definitions of case study have been provided in the last three decades (Van Wynsberghe and Khan, 2007), each categorising it differently as either a technique, a method, a methodology, or a research design, and thus turning it into one of the most ill-defined terms in the field of research. In my study, two definitions will be used to cast light on the conceptual nature of this research tradition. The first one, advanced by Van Wynsberghe and Khan, is a more philosophical description of the term, which succeeds in capturing the encompassing character of case study at a paradigmatic, disciplinary, and methodological level: "case study is a transparadigmatic and transdisciplinary heuristic that involves the careful delineation of the phenomena for which evidence is being collected" (2007: 80). The second one, provided by Creswell, represents a more working definition which focuses on the methodological process involved in this type of research: "case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a **case**) or multiple bounded system (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data

collection involving **multiple sources of information** [...], and reports a case **description** and case-based themes” [emphasis in original] (2007: 73).

Four main reasons motivated the selection of case study in this research project. First, I aimed to understand phenomena *in depth* (PLLEs, KAG, GRPK, and CFs) within their *real-life context of occurrence* (EFL grammar teaching practices in state secondary school classrooms). This involved the study of the phenomena in their *natural settings* with *no manipulation or control* of the events on my part. Second, I attempted to probe deeply into the phenomena within a *specific unit of analysis* (two qualified and experienced EFL teachers). Third, I meant to use *multiple sources of data*, which comprised direct observation, stimulated recall sessions, semi-structured interviews, grammar correction tasks, diaries, and autobiographical accounts. These sources were expected to produce *a large amount of rich-information data*, which would be eventually arranged into themes and categories. Finally, I sought to extend our understanding of the *complex nature* of the phenomena and the relationship among them and the *unique* temporal and spatial context in which they take place. Thus, I expected to assist interpretation of similar cases, phenomena, and contexts. These aspects of case studies will be further discussed in the following sub-sections.

#### 4.2.2 Type

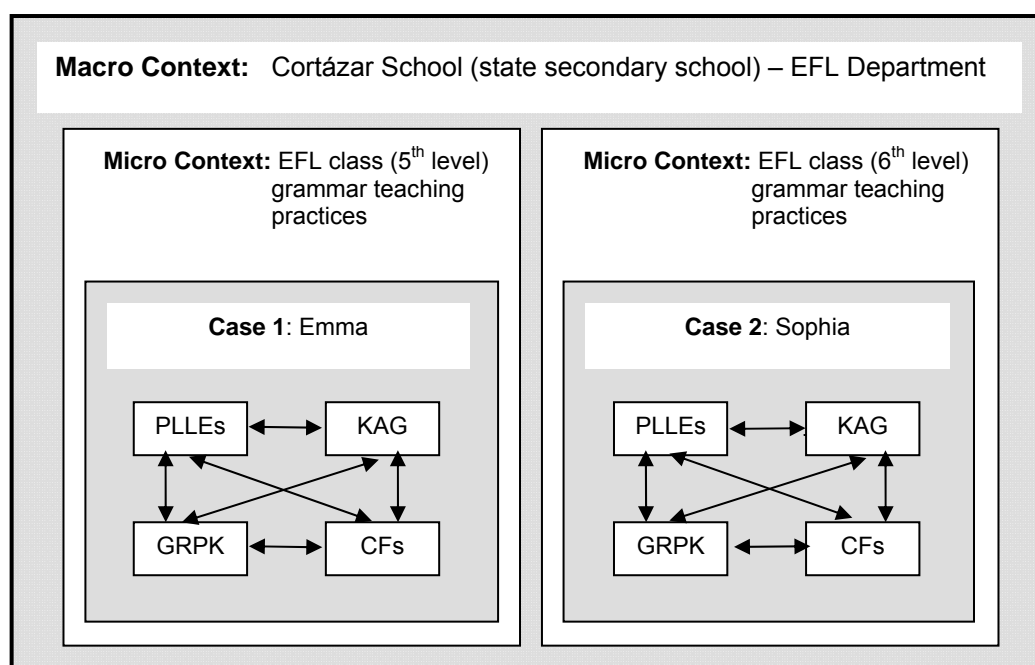
This research project follows an ‘embedded multiple-case design’ (Yin, 2009). That is, there are two *cases* or *primary units of analysis*: **Emma** and **Sophia**. Within each case, the focus is placed on four *embedded units* (or *subunits*) of analysis: their **PLLEs**, **KAG**, **GRPK**, and **CFs** (also referred to as ‘phenomena’). The primary and embedded units of analysis are studied within their particular *micro context of occurrence*: the teachers’ **grammar teaching practices** taking place in their **EFL classes** (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> level respectively), which are, in turn, immersed in a *macro context*: **EFL department at Cortázar School** (a **state secondary school**). Figure 4, adapted from Yin (2009: 46), is a graphic representation of the design used in this particular study.

Stake identifies three further types of case study: *intrinsic*, which “is not undertaken primarily because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but because, in all its particularity and ordinariness, this case itself is of interest”; *instrumental*, which “is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalisation[,] the case is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role, and it supports our understanding

of something else”; and *collective*, which “is instrumental study extended to several cases” [emphasis in original] (2000: 437). My present project falls within the ‘collective’ category. It is instrumental in nature since the cases themselves are not the focus of the study but are meant to help advance our understanding of the phenomena. Moreover, two individual cases are used, which may be similar in some respects but dissimilar in some others, thus adding “redundancy and variety” to the study (ibid.). It is believed that making sense of the cases selected helps interpret, and possibly better theorise about, similar cases and phenomena.

Finally, there are two more characteristics of the present study. This is *within-site*, as opposed to multi-sited (Creswell, 2007). This means that the cases are located in a single ‘geographical’ location (see micro- and macro- contexts above). The other feature is the fact that, as will be explained in 4.5, the study involves a combination of *within-case* and *cross-case analysis* (ibid.). In other words, it entails a detailed description and interpretation of themes and categories within each case as well as a thematic analysis across the two cases.

**Figure 4:** Embedded multiple-case design followed by the present study



#### 4.2.3 Validity and reliability

Since validity is in fact a matter of degree rather than an absolute state (Gronlund, 1981), some of the actions and decisions taken in this study cannot

be claimed to eliminate invalidity altogether but rather to minimise it and to maximise validity. Internal validity was addressed, for instance, through an *extended engagement in the field* (the data collection took eight months to complete, two of which involved my full immersion in the field through class observation and stimulated recall), *close and continuous observation* (a total number of 40 clock hours of class observation, 20 per teacher), and *triangulation of data sources* (evidence from different methods was reported and combined in the description of findings). *Data triangulation* also increases construct validity since “the multiple sources of evidence essentially provide multiple measures of the same phenomenon” (Yin, 2009: 116-117). In relation to external validity, *detailed* and *in-depth descriptions* were provided in the report of findings to help readers find out the extent to which these findings can be transferred to other cases, phenomena, or situations they are familiar with (Schofield, 1990). Cohen et al., referring to Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) understanding of the concept of transferability in qualitative research, state that “it is not the researcher’s task to provide an index of transferability; rather, [...] researchers should provide sufficiently rich data for the readers and users of research to determine whether transferability is possible” (2007: 137).

In addition to the aforementioned actions and decisions, I gave careful consideration to the following pieces of advice offered by Cohen et al. for the different stages of the study. At the design stage, validity can be enhanced by “selecting an appropriate methodology for answering the research questions” (see 4.2.1), “selecting appropriate instrumentation for gathering the type of data required” (see 4.3.2), “using an appropriate sample” (in the context of my project, this refers to the selection of the cases; see 4.4), and “devising and using appropriate instruments [...] avoiding any ambiguity of instructions [...] and questions; using instruments that will catch the complexity of issues; avoiding leading questions; [...] avoiding making the instruments too short or too long; avoiding too many or too few items for each issue” (a pilot study of some of the instruments was carried out to achieve these aims; see 4.3.3) (ibid.: 144). At the stage of data collection, invalidity can be reduced by: “minimizing reactivity effects: respondents behaving differently when subjected to scrutiny or being placed in new situations” (in this study, every effort was made to make the participants feel comfortable and to avoid threatening questions or situations; see 4.3.2); “building on the motivations of the respondents”, “tailoring the instruments

to the concentration span of the respondents and addressing other situational factors (e.g., health, environment, noise, distraction, threat); and “addressing factors concerning the researcher” (e.g., his attitude, comments, and gestures) (ibid.: 144-145). At the data analysis stage, invalidity threats can be minimised by “avoiding poor coding of qualitative data”, “avoiding making inferences and generalizations beyond the capability of the data to support such statements”, and “avoiding selective use of data” (ibid.: 145). Finally, at the stage of data reporting, validity can be maximised by “avoiding using data selectively and unrepresentatively, for example, accentuating the positive and neglecting or ignoring the negative”, “making claims which are sustainable by the data”, and “ensuring that the research questions are answered” (ibid.: 145-146).

With respect to reliability, Cohen et al. claim that, in qualitative research, this entails “fidelity to real life, context- and situation-specificity, authenticity, comprehensiveness, detail, honesty, depth of response and meaningfulness to the respondents” (ibid.: 149). Together with some of the actions and decisions described above to increase validity such as data triangulation, use of multiple methods, and detailed descriptions, I maximised reliability by: 1- including the teachers’ actual words whenever possible in the description of findings; 2- developing a case study database (Yin, 2009) which includes field notes, documents (e.g., students’ writings, tests, syllabi, and extra activities), transcriptions of interviews and stimulated recall sessions, the teachers’ written responses (e.g., grammaticality judgement tasks, diaries), and audio-recorded materials; and 3- using respondent validation to correct factual errors, to add further information, and to hear the teachers’ opinion about the adequacy of the analysis.

#### **4.2.4 Ethical considerations**

Given the researcher’s close involvement in the field and the keen interest in the participants’ personal and professional perspectives and circumstances, case studies like the present project pose substantial ethical risks which must be assessed and minimised. Even though I believe that preventive actions are never sufficient to eliminate these risks completely and, therefore, that the most important aspects are the researcher’s honesty, moral duties, and good intentions as well as the informal contract negotiated between the researcher and



the researched, a number of formal measures were adopted which could reflect the ethical nature of the purposes, contents, and procedures of the study:

- A meeting was held with the head of the EFL department and then with the school authorities. The aims, contents, and procedures of the study were fully disclosed. It was agreed that the data collection would be conducted throughout the academic year, and not in three months as was planned, to avoid the participants' exhaustion and lack of motivation. It was also settled that the cases would be selected from those teachers who voluntarily agreed to participate and that these had the right to withdraw from the project at any time. It was also established that classes would be audio-, not video-, recorded. Formal written permission was obtained from the school's head teacher.
- A meeting was held with 15 teachers and the head of the EFL department. I introduced myself and disclosed the contents of the study only partially so as to avoid the contamination of the data. I made it clear to the teachers that some aspects about the project could not be shared at this stage. Three teachers agreed to participate and gave their written consent (see sample copy of teacher consent in Appendix 1). One of them eventually discontinued her participation in the project due to health problems.
- The participants were informed about who would have access to the data and thesis (supervisors, panel members, and examiners). They also allowed the researcher to develop a database and to make their cases public in conferences and publications (see Appendix 1).
- The participants were fully informed about the data collection procedures and were allowed to make any necessary changes to accommodate them to their personal and professional needs and circumstances.
- All the people involved in the study were ensured anonymity and confidentiality. The members of staff (head of EFL department and the rest of the teachers) were referred to generically and, in the case of the two teachers being studied, agreed pseudonyms were used. The students' names were not mentioned in the transcriptions of classes. The school has also been assigned a fictitious name.
- The participants were free to refuse to respond to questions during interviews or to complete some tasks. They could also ask me to delete or not make use of some of the information they provided. Personal information which the two

teachers shared during the interviews and which was not related to the study was deleted from the transcripts and not used in the report of findings.

- It was agreed that I would meet with each of the two participants to show them the findings and conclusions of their particular case and to record their reactions (*respondent validation*).
- Thank you letters were sent to all the people participating in the study.

### 4.3 Method

#### 4.3.1 Definition and characteristics

Method is used in this study to refer to the range of instruments employed to collect data which are then used as the basis for description, interpretation, inference, and explanation. A *multi-method approach* was adopted in the present project, which means that two or more methods were used to gather data. These methods include those collecting *naturally occurring data* and those gathering *generated data*. The former types “allow investigation of phenomena in their natural settings; [...] provide data which is [sic] an 'enactment' of social behaviour in its own social setting, rather than a 'recounting' of it generated specifically for the research study; [and] are of particular value where behaviours and interactions [...] need to be understood in 'real world' contexts” (Ritchie, 2003: 34). In this study, non-participant observation was used to study phenomena in naturally occurring settings. The latter methods “involve 'reconstruction' (Bryman, 2001) and require re-processing and re-telling of attitudes, beliefs, behaviour or other phenomena. The experience, thought, event, behaviour or whatever, is mentally re-processed and verbally recounted by study participants. Generated data give insight into people's own perspectives on and interpretation of their beliefs and behaviours - and, most crucially an understanding of the meaning that they attach to them” (ibid.: 36). In my study, generated data methods included stimulated recall, autobiographical accounts, diaries, grammaticality judgement tasks, and individual interviews.

#### 4.3.2 Methods

**Table 5** shows a summary of the data collection process in chronological order: when each instrument was employed, who was/were involved (apart from the researcher), how long each method took, and the research questions (1-3) related to each instrument.

**Table 5:** Summary of data collection process in chronological order

<i>Data collection instrument</i>	<i>People involved</i>	<i>When used</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Language used</i>	<i>Research questions involved</i>
Semi-structured Interview	Emma and Sophia	Before stimulated recall period (10-12 February 2008)	90' each interview	Spanish, some reference to English	2 (PLLEs, GRPK), 3,
Grammaticality Judgement Task	Emma and Sophia	Before stimulated recall period (April 2008)	N/A	English	2 (KAG)
Autobiographical Account (first entry of teachers' diaries)	Emma and Sophia	Before stimulated recall period (July 2008)	N/A	Emma: English; Sophia: Spanish	1, 2
Observations and Stimulated Recall	Emma and Sophia	Stimulated recall (11 August – 10 October 2008)	9 weeks	English	1, 2, 3
Teacher diaries	Emma and Sophia	During stimulated recall period (11 August – 10 October 2008)	9 weeks	Emma: English; Sophia: Spanish	1, 2, 3
Semi-structured Interview	Emma and Sophia	After stimulated recall period (October 2008)	40' each interview	English	1, 2 (PLLEs, GRPK), 3
Semi-structured Interview	Head of ELT department	After stimulated recall period (October 2008)	70'	Spanish, some reference to English	1, 3 (+ Chapter II)
Semi-structured Interviews	Other ELT teachers	After stimulated recall period (October 2008)	40' each	Spanish, some reference to English	1, 3 (+ Chapter II)
Analysis of documents	-	Pre-while-post stimulated recall period (March – October 2008)	8 months	-	1, 2, 3

A total number of *five* different methods was used in this research project: interviews of various types, observations, a grammaticality judgement task, teacher diaries (including an autobiographical account), and analysis of documents. The observations and stimulated recall interviews represented the *main* data sources, whereas the rest of the instruments provided *preliminary* or *additional* information about the issues explored. The methods are described in detail in the following sub-sections.

**A. Interviews of various types**

A.1. *Semi-structured one-to-one interviews* with Emma and Sophia: the aim was to establish a detailed profile of their educational and professional background, of their experience as language learners, of their general beliefs about L2 teaching and grammar teaching in particular, and of their working conditions (e.g., their views on institutional policies; language syllabus; and human, material, and information resources available to them at school). Two interviews were carried out (one at the beginning and the other at the end of the project) and, although based mostly on the aforesaid themes, they were flexible enough to allow other relevant topics to emerge. The purposes of the research project were disclosed only partially so as to avoid contaminating the data by leading the teachers' responses during the interview and/or influencing their behaviour in the classroom. They were told that the focus of the study was on experiential, cognitive, and contextual factors but no reference was made to the aspects (PLLEs, KAG, GRPK, and CFs) I was particularly interested in or to the fact that I was exploring the interplay among these in relation to their grammar teaching practices. The teachers were invited to choose to use Spanish (their L1), English, or both. Both teachers decided to use Spanish in the first interview, though they occasionally resorted to English to refer to some technical aspects of their profession, and English in the second interview. The data collected provided answers to the following research questions: 2 (mainly about their PLLEs and their GRPK) and 3.

A.2. *Two semi-structured group interviews* with other teachers from the EFL department (5 teachers in all): the objective was to discuss aspects about the school, the EFL department, their qualifications and teaching experience, the aspects they thought influenced their grammar teaching practices, and the role (if any) which CFs played in shaping their grammar teaching practices. The purpose of interviewing these teachers in groups, instead of individually, was to set better conditions for discussion and, therefore, to help generate a wider range of responses. These interviews took place at the very end of the project so as to avoid revealing information about the purposes of my study and, thus, influencing the classroom behaviour of the informants. They were conducted in the same language as the one used during departmental meetings, i.e. Spanish, since most teachers feel inhibited about using L2 in front of their peers and, if forced to

do so, they are often reluctant to participate, at least actively. The data collected were used to describe the institutional context (Chapter II) and to triangulate the information provided by Emma and Sophia in relation to CFs (especially institutional and departmental ones) (research questions 1 and 3).

A.3. *A semi-structured one-to-one interview* with the head of the ELT department: this revealed meaningful information about the school context, all the teachers in the department, and their teaching practices. This interview was conducted at the end of the study in Spanish, though the interviewee was free to use English when necessary. The data collected were used to describe the institutional context (Chapter II) and to triangulate the information provided by Emma and Sophia in relation to CFs (especially institutional and departmental ones) (research questions 1 and 3).

A.4. *Stimulated recall*: it played a central role in this study since “it enables teachers [...] as well as the researcher to present their various interpretations of what is going on in the classroom, and for these interpretations to be linked explicitly to the points in the lesson which gave rise to them” (Nunan, 1992: 94). This instrument can be used for two main purposes: 1- to help participants to recall the interactive thoughts they had while performing specific classroom tasks (e.g., they are shown key episodes of a lesson and asked questions such as “What were you thinking at that moment?”) (see Gass and Mackey, 2000) and 2- to elicit the reasons behind certain classroom behaviour and decisions. The latter use was the one employed in my study. As Borg explains, stimuli are used “as the basis of concrete discussions of what the teachers were doing, their interpretations of the events represented in the stimuli and of their reasons for the instructional decisions they were taking” (2006: 219). Observations and stimulated recall helped to collect data in relation to research questions 1, 2, and 3.

Based on an adaptation of the Faerch and Kasper (1987) classification categories of introspection research (Gass and Mackey, 2000: 26-28, 47-55), **Table 6** shows the characteristics of the way stimulated recall was used to collect introspective data in this study:

**Table 6:** Features of stimulated recall in this study

<i>Category</i>	<i>My study</i>
<b>Object of Introspection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers' grammar teaching practices</li> <li>PLLEs, KAG, GRPK, CFs</li> </ul>
<b>Modality</b>	The data introspected were oral
<b>Relationship to concrete action</b>	The introspection was related to concrete classroom events or actions
<b>Temporal relation to action</b>	Each teacher was observed twice a week, each time during a two-hour class. A stimulated recall session was held once a week the day after the last class of the week. This means that the time between the events under analysis and the interview was never longer than 4 days after the first observation of the week. In the cases when a stimulated recall session was cancelled, arrangements were made with the teacher so that the time between the events under analysis and the interview was kept as minimum as possible (never longer than a week)
<b>Participant training</b>	The type of stimulated recall used required no specialised training on the part of the informants. The participants are experienced teachers and teacher trainers who are used to being observed and to participating in interviews. Yet instructions were provided during follow-up interviews
<b>Stimulus for recall</b>	A recall support (audio and transcriptions of events) was used to prompt responses. When relevant, other stimuli were used such as textbook materials, tasks, and learners' work
<b>Elicitation procedure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I initiated the verbalisations. Basically, I asked the teacher to listen to and read the transcript of a grammar-related classroom event and asked them to explain the reason(s) behind their actions (e.g., decisions, reactions, behaviour, etc.)</li> <li>Though I selected the events to be discussed, the participants were invited to comment on other actions they considered relevant</li> <li>Though the discussion was based on my questions, a certain amount of freedom was allowed in terms of the direction the discussion took (<i>semi-structured interview</i>)</li> </ul>

Stimulated recall interviews were semi-structured and one-to-one (researcher and teacher). Kvale's summary of the aspects of qualitative research interviews provides a detailed picture of the nature of the follow-up interviews included in this study (**Table 8**):

**Table 7:** Kvale's aspects of qualitative research interviews (Kvale, 1996: 30-31)

<i>Aspects</i>	<i>Description</i>
<b>Life World</b>	"The topic of qualitative interviews is the everyday lived world of the interviewee and his or her relation to it."
<b>Meaning</b>	"The interview seeks to interpret the meaning of central themes in the life world of the subject. The interviewer registers and interprets the meaning of what is said and how it is said."
<b>Qualitative</b>	"The interview seeks qualitative knowledge expressed in normal

	language, it does not aim at quantification.”
<b>Descriptive</b>	“The interview attempts to obtain open nuanced descriptions of different aspects of the subjects’ life worlds.”
<b>Specificity</b>	“Descriptions of specific situations and action sequences are elicited, not general opinions.”
<b>Deliberate Naiveté</b>	“The interviewer exhibits an openness to new and unexpected phenomena, rather than having ready-made categories and schemes of interpretation.”
<b>Focused</b>	“The interview is focused on particular themes; it is neither strictly structured with standardised questions, nor entirely ‘non-directive’.”
<b>Ambiguity</b>	“Interviewee statements can sometimes be ambiguous, reflecting contradictions in the world the subject lives in”.
<b>Change</b>	“The process of being interviewed may produce new insights and awareness, and the subject may in the course of the interview come to change his or her descriptions and meanings about a theme.”
<b>Sensitivity</b>	“Different interviewers can produce different statements on the same themes, depending on their sensitivity to and knowledge of the interview topic.” (In the present study there is only one interviewer, myself)
<b>Interpersonal Situation</b>	“The knowledge obtained is produced through the interpersonal interaction in the interview.”
<b>Positive Experience</b>	“A well carried out research interview can be a rare and enriching experience for the interviewee, who may obtain new insights into his or her life situation.”

In addition to these aspects, the stimulated recall interviews in this research project were meant to capture the uniqueness of the situations the participants were involved in, the events they engaged in, the actions they performed, the attitudes they adopted, the feelings they experienced, and the explanations and reasons they provided. Given the associated linguistic, cognitive, and socio-cultural demands involved in this process, the interviewees were asked to speak in Spanish (their L1) and were free to resort to English if they wanted to (see 4.3.3). However, both Emma and Sophia asked from the very beginning if they could speak in English and, therefore, all stimulated recall sessions were carried out in L2. Each interview lasted between 40-80 minutes; the time it took depended not only on my agenda for a particular session but very much on the physical, mental, and emotional state of the interviewees. The latter were allowed to cancel or end an interview session whenever they felt like doing so, and those aspects remaining to discuss were dealt with in the next interview. This means that every attempt was made to make the teachers feel comfortable and for their needs to be considered. Stimulated recall interviews were actually rescheduled on two occasions, and were ended once by Emma and twice by Sophia, in all cases because of time constraints on their part.

**B. Observations:** it was a major source of data in this study since it involved the observation of the participants' actual grammar teaching practices (e.g., their decisions, actions, responses, and the internal CFs apparently influencing their behaviour). **Table 7** shows a description of the observations conducted in the present study, based on the 9 (nine) dimensions of observational research presented by Borg (2006: 230).

**Table 8:** Dimensions of observational research vis-à-vis the present study

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Description</i>
<b>Participation</b>	My role was that of <i>non-participant</i> , which means I sat at the back of the classroom, took notes, and avoided interacting with the teacher or the learners involved in the events being observed. When any of these participants attempted to interact with me (e.g., by asking me a question), I tried to make sure this interaction was kept to a minimum so as to avoid influencing the naturally occurring events and contaminating the data to be collected.
<b>Awareness</b>	In the present study the degree of awareness was <i>overt</i> . All the participants involved in the events were aware that they were being observed and by whom.
<b>Authenticity</b>	The settings under observation were <i>real</i> , that is to say, only naturally occurring events were observed.
<b>Disclosure</b>	This dimension refers to "the extent to which the purposes of the observation are explained to those being observed" (ibid.). This aspect should be treated very carefully since a researcher providing minimal disclosure of the purposes "can be accused of not providing the basis for a fully informed agreement" whereas a full disclosure of the objectives of the observation can "unintentionally contaminate the data by leading the participants' responses" (ibid.). Therefore, the disclosure in my study was <i>partial</i> . The participants were provided with a brief description of the research study (see point A.1. above).
<b>Recording</b>	The observational record was <i>technological</i> , specifically <i>audio</i> . The first intention was to use <i>video</i> , but the idea was dismissed because of two main reasons: 1- this technology is too intrusive and may generate negative reactions among the teachers and learners, 2- authorisation from the school authorities was not granted because of reason 1. Teaching materials, lesson plans, and students' work were also collected as part of the observational record. Finally, observations were additionally recorded in field notes. These field notes included information about the physical setting, the people involved in the events, the tasks performed by the learners, the objects used, the specific actions done by the teachers and learners (e.g., interruptions), the events taking place (e.g., formal presentations), the time that tasks and events took, goals and whether these were made explicit, and feelings and attitudes (adapted from Spradley, 1980).
<b>Structure</b>	The structure of the observations was <i>open</i> . Observational data were recorded in a narrative format and not against predetermined analytical categories. That is why, forms of non-categorical representations such as audio-recording and field-notes were used.
<b>Coding</b>	This refers to "the extent to which data are coded according to existing frameworks" (Borg, 2006: 230). In the present project the observational data were first linked to pre-conceived themes (the foci of the study) and, within each theme, codes and categories were derived



	retrospectively from the data themselves.
<b>Analysis</b>	The data were analysed <i>qualitatively</i> .
<b>Scope</b>	2 teachers were observed during 10 two-hour classes each. This took exactly 9 weeks since some classes were cancelled due to strikes, teacher absenteeism, and institutional events. Stimulated recall sessions were held mostly in the school. Apart from the observations and stimulated recall interviews, I spent a great deal of time in the institution interacting with other teachers from the EFL and other departments and with the school authorities and clerical staff. Morrison claims that by “being immersed in a particular context over time not only will the salient features of the situation emerge and present themselves but a more holistic view will be gathered of the <i>interrelationships of factors</i> ” [emphasis added] (1993: 88).

As suggested by Kirk and Miller (1986) and Spradley (1979), four sets of observational data were included:

- “notes made *in situ* [***field notes***];
- expanded notes that are made as soon as possible after the initial observations [to be included in ***researcher journal***];
- journal notes to record issues, ideas, difficulties etc. that arise during the field-work [***researcher journal***];

a developing, tentative running record of ongoing analysis and interpretation [***researcher journal***]” [emphasis in original] (Cohen et al., 2000: 313)

**C. Grammaticality judgement task:** This method was designed to explore the participants’ KAG (research question 2). The aspects of their KAG examined were: a. their knowledge of *descriptive grammar* since this is the grammar used in EFL classes at this school and by most textbooks, b. their knowledge of *grammatical points* (at least those specified in the school EFL syllabus), c. their knowledge of *grammatical metalanguage*. Although published tests are said to be objective and to have been piloted and refined (Cohen et al., 2000), the task used in this project was produced by me so that the purposes, objectives, and content of the task deliberately fitted my *specific* needs (i.e. examine the type of KAG specified above) in the *specific* context in which it was employed (ibid.) (see 2.3 and 2.4). Since the participants were very experienced EFL teachers who could have seen the grammaticality judgement task as a threat to their self-esteem or as leading to embarrassment, and in view of the fact that this could have affected their attitude and participation during the rest of the study, they were required to complete four types of exercises which they were used to doing in their everyday practices: identifying grammar mistakes, providing correct

versions, naming the grammatical aspect in each correction, and explaining the rule(s) broken in each mistake (see Appendix 2). The task was done before observations started so as to provide preliminary information about the teachers' KAG. Unfortunately, the task did not produce compelling evidence about the participants' KAG and, as suggested in 5.3.1 B and 6.3.1 B, a follow-up interview would have been necessary to maximise its effectiveness.

**D. Teacher diaries** were intended to provide teachers with an opportunity to express in written form their thoughts, beliefs, ideas, feelings, and attitudes in relation to the events taking place in their lessons. This method also enabled them to record personal and professional reflections, analyses, and evaluations, and complemented the information obtained through the follow-up interviews.

*Autobiographical accounts* were the first entry in the teachers' diaries. Before observations took place, the teachers were asked to write an autobiographical account of their experience as language learners and as language teacher trainees. The following guiding questions were used to explore the teachers' PLLEs and current teaching practices (see 4.3.3):

*A: Your experience as a foreign/second language learner:*

- If you think of the time you were a foreign/second language learner, what first images come to your mind?
- What kind of teaching methods were used? What do you remember most about these lessons? What type of tasks/activities did you enjoy the most/the least?
- What role did grammar teaching play in these lessons? What was the main approach to grammar teaching?
- In your opinion, were you a "successful" language learner? What were your particular strengths and weaknesses?
- Do you think your experience as a foreign/second language learner has had an influence on your current teaching methodology? Explain.

*B: Your experience as a (pre- and in-service) language teacher trainee*

- Did your trainers or training course(s) promote a particular methodology? If so, what were the tenets of such methodology?

- What role did grammar teaching play? Were you encouraged to adopt particular approaches to grammar teaching? If so, which ones? What did you think of them? How effective were they?
- Do you think your teacher training experiences have had an influence on your current teaching methodology? Explain.
- What is your current approach to grammar teaching? If possible, illustrate your answer with examples and/or anecdotes.
- Has this approach to grammar teaching changed along the years? If so, how has it changed and what has caused such changes?

The data gathered were relevant to the following research questions: 1 and 2.

During the nine weeks of observations, teacher diary writing was more structured at the beginning, when the participants were asked to respond to some guiding questions, and gradually became more open-ended. Naturally, these questions were provided when some grammar teaching took place during the class. Examples of guiding questions include:

- How satisfied are you with your grammar teaching today? Explain.
- Is there anything you particularly liked or disliked about your grammar teaching practices today?
- What would you like to change, if anything, about these grammar teaching practices? How would you effect that change?
- Is there anything you planned to do today in relation to grammar which you couldn't or didn't want to do? Explain.
- Did anything unexpected happen today in connection with grammar? If so, what and how did that affect your teaching?
- What do you think most influenced your grammar-related decisions / actions today?

Teachers' diaries were used monologically, instead of dialogically, and were written in L1, L2, or both, depending on the teachers' choice. Although very few studies have included diary writing by experienced teachers – Borg is aware of only two: Woods, 1996; and Sakui and Gaies, 2003 (2006: 255-256) -, I thought this method was worth adopting since it could potentially provide invaluable insights into their inner worlds and teaching practices. However, despite my efforts, only three entries were written by the participants (in addition to the autobiographical accounts), two by Emma and one by Sophia. The data collected were relevant to the following questions: 1, 2, and 3.

**E. Analysis of documents:** documents like the course syllabus, grammar-based tasks, textbook materials, and students' writings were collected to help me to explore and understand not only the grammar teaching practices taking place in the classroom but also the CFs influencing them (e.g., the textbook). Some documents were used in stimulated recall sessions such as students' compositions. Research questions related to this instrument are 1, 2, and 3.

Though some methods produced more significant and larger amounts of data than others, all of them played a key role in revealing valuable information to find out about the aspects to be studied and the relationship among them. The instruments collecting preliminary or additional information provided research-relevant data which were used to triangulate the findings obtained through the main data sources (observations and stimulated recall), thus ensuring that reliable inferences were derived from the data collected. Therefore, equal and full thought was given to the design and administration of each method and, in order to avoid procedural pitfalls, all participants were supplied with proper instructions. The three methods which required a more elaborated design and more practice were piloted by the researcher, as will be discussed in the following section.

#### **4.3.3 Pilot study**

Four methods (autobiographical accounts, grammaticality judgement task, observations, and stimulated recall) were piloted with teachers who have a similar profile to the participants in my study. They are all Argentinian EFL Spanish-speaking educators with more than 10 years of teaching experience each. They are fully qualified in ELT, having completed a 4/5-year undergraduate TTC. They all keep updated by attending in-service teacher development courses or by undertaking postgraduate studies, half of them having obtained an MA in TEFL/ELT. Most of them are or have been EFL teacher trainers and they all have some experience working as EFL teachers at state secondary schools.

The purpose of piloting the autobiographical accounts and the grammaticality judgement task was to assess: a- the validity of the instruments (i.e. whether they gathered the information they had been designed to collect), b- the clarity of the instructions, c- the conditions in which they were administered,

and d- the impact they had on the teachers. What follows is a description of the results this pilot study produced.

### **A. Autobiographical accounts**

Five teachers completed the task of writing an autobiographical account. They were free to write either in L1, L2, or both. The instructions to the task were written in English. Three of the teachers wrote their accounts in English and two in Spanish. These are the results of the pilot study:

- The method succeeded in collecting the information required. However, two questions have been added to collect more information about the participants' grammar teaching practices and their GRPK: 1- *What is your current approach to grammar teaching? If possible, illustrate your answer with examples and/or anecdotes.* 2- *Has this approach to grammar teaching changed along the years? If so, how has it changed and what has caused such changes?*
- The participants claimed the instructions were clear, which was also reflected in the fact that none of them asked for clarifications and that they provided the required information.
- The language they chose to write their accounts appeared to influence the quality and quantity of the data provided. The teachers writing their autobiographical accounts in Spanish reported that, though at first they thought of writing in English, they had decided to do it in Spanish since they felt more relaxed and could recall more memories and images in their own mother tongue. Those who wrote in English claimed they were often more concerned with the language and style they were using to write their accounts than with the content of their answers. As a result, the two accounts in Spanish were not only two or three times longer than those in English but they also provided richer information. For instance, it could be seen that in the accounts in Spanish the ideas flowed more easily and that, unlike those writing in English, the participants writing in their L1 tended to expand more often on their ideas, the reasons behind their decisions, and the descriptions of events or anecdotes. It could also be seen that those using Spanish resorted to English to name aspects of their profession (e.g., types of syllabi) and to explain technical matters related to their professions. Therefore, in the instructions to the actual autobiographical accounts, the participants were

asked to write in Spanish (their L1) and were told to resort to L2 whenever they felt like doing so. The freedom to switch codes is highlighted as an advantage in autobiographic narratives (see Pavlenko, 2007: 172).

- A further distinction could be drawn between those writing in English and those doing it in Spanish. Whereas the former answered the questions one by one, the latter wrote in narrative style answering a group or all the questions together. As a result, the ones using English were more restricted to providing the required information than those writing in Spanish, who tended to add more details and to include unexpected data. Consequently, the participants in the actual study were asked explicitly to write their accounts as a whole narrative.
- When asked about the conditions in which they had to write their accounts, three of the teachers stated they had liked the idea of being given a whole month to complete the task, since this allowed them to write when they felt inspired and on different days. Yet the other two confessed they had written their accounts the day before the deadline. Not surprisingly, these two accounts happened to be much shorter than the other three. As a result, the actual participants were allotted 40 days to complete the task and were advised to write when they felt inspired and, if possible, at different times throughout the period assigned.
- When asked about the type of information included, two teachers claimed that, when they were informed that the autobiographical account was meant to be the first entry of a diary and that their information would be kept confidential, they felt the need to include more 'private/personal' information. Therefore, the instructions included in the actual autobiographical accounts specified the 'diary' and confidential nature of the accounts.
- Finally, the teachers stated that they had enjoyed doing this type of introspective work and that they would be willing to do more introspection.

### **B. Grammaticality judgement task**

Five teachers completed the task of correcting the students' writings. As is explained in 4.3.2, experienced teachers are particularly susceptible to this type of tasks. Hence, every effort was made to make sure the task was administered under the most favourable conditions so that the informants did not feel

threatened and felt as comfortable as possible. As a result of this piloting, the following changes were made to the original design of this instrument:

- *Two compositions were used instead of three.* The five teachers argued that the correction of the students' writings had taken them a lot of time and effort. Unexpectedly, all of them handed in the correction of the first two compositions and asked for permission not correct the third text, claiming they felt too tired to do so.
- *The first two texts were used.* Unlike the first two texts, the third one contained a few grammatical mistakes and was meant to check if the teachers tended to over-correct and make grammatical changes in students' writings even when there were no grammatical mistakes. Therefore, I decided to include the first two texts for they tested the participants' KAG more adequately.
- *No specific time was allotted for the correction of the texts.* First, the teachers disagreed about the time which should be assigned for the correction of the texts. Whereas two teachers claimed they had needed about one hour, the other three teachers said the correction had taken them between 2 and 3 hours. Second, four of them confessed they had corrected the texts on different days during their school breaks or free time. They justified this claiming that they were very busy and could not carry out the correction at once, and that the correction had taken them a lot of thinking, which required them more time to reflect upon their answers. Since the actual participants were also very busy professionals and since what mattered was the quality of their corrections (not the time it took them to do so), they were given 30 days to carry out the task, which allowed them to correct the texts at their own pace.
- *The instructions were read and explained to them.* Even though they claimed the layout and instructions were clear, some of the teachers did not include some of the aspects they had been asked to provide in each correction.
- *The materials were provided in written and digital form.* All the teachers in the pilot study were sent the task via e-mail. Three of them printed it so that they could resort to it whenever they had time to correct or felt like doing so. They also claimed they were more comfortable correcting on paper and that they felt they could see the mistakes more clearly. The actual informants were handed in a copy of the grammaticality judgement task at the end of the first

interview and were asked to pass on their corrections to the copy which was sent via e-mail.

### **C. Observations and stimulated recall interviews**

One teacher was involved in the piloting of these methods. She was observed during two weeks (4 one-hour classes) and two one-hour stimulated recall sessions were conducted, one every two classes. The purpose of this pilot study was to practise how to: 1- identify and select relevant grammar-related events, 2- collect significant field notes, 3- identify documents which could be used in the follow-up interviews, 4- use technological gadgets (digital voice recorder and MP4), 5- transcribe classroom events, 6- prepare interview questions which were valid to explore the aspects under study, and 7- interview participants using stimulated recall. Piloting the observations and stimulated recall helped me to gain the following insights:

- *Observations*: 1. They allowed me to identify a variety of grammar-related events which could be used for stimulated recall interviews (e.g., grammar presentations, feedback comments to individual learners and to the whole class, formal explanations, incidental grammar teaching, error correction, grammar practice, and integration of grammar with skills work). 2. Familiarising with the students' names (e.g., ask the teachers for a list of learners and write comments about them each class), their work (e.g., compositions and homework), and class materials (e.g., textbook) helps not only during the observation of classes and the collection of field notes but also during the stimulated recall interviews (e.g., to understand teachers' rationales for their decisions and actions). 3. It seems important to take notes in situ of the context in which grammar-related events take place (this might facilitate my and the teachers' understanding of these incidents when listening to the tape or when reading the transcript). 4. Use at least two digital voice recorders or MP4s and place them in different parts of the classroom to capture speech as much as possible.
- *Stimulated recall interviews*: 1. Recalling specific classroom events seems to be not always easy for teachers, especially when they teach many classes and are exposed to many classroom situations each week. Therefore, using various types of stimuli (e.g., listening to the tape, reading the transcript, and looking at documents) might help maximise their capacity to recall such



events. In addition, the time between the events to be recalled and the interview should be kept as minimum as possible. It also seems to be a good idea to start the session with some general questions about the lesson as a warm-up (e.g., how did you like your previous class?). 2. In order to make the context in which events take place more explicit, it is sometimes necessary that transcriptions include speech (e.g., discussions) and non-speech elements (e.g., body language such as students' raising their hands). 3. The teacher in this pilot study claimed that she felt very relaxed when she was given the freedom to choose the language to be used in the sessions (L1, L2, or both). In her particular case, she spoke in Spanish most of the times and often switched into English to use specific terminology (e.g., *deductive tasks*) and to provide some rationales. Since code-switching appears to help them to get their meanings across, the participants should be advised to use this technique if they feel it facilitates the communication of their ideas.

#### **4.4 Participants**

##### **4.4.1 Selection of the cases**

I did not intend to select teachers or schools which were 'representative' of all Argentine state secondary school settings since I believe that all teachers and schools are unique in nature and the purpose of this study was precisely to explore and depict that uniqueness (see George and Bennett, 2004: 30-31; Small, 2009: 15-18; and Stake, 1995: 4). Yet it is also a fact that all state schools in Argentina share some realities such as a low budget, basic building facilities, limited materials resources for teaching and learning purposes, and staff's full adherence to strikes, and, though to a lesser degree (see Chapter II), Cortázar School seems to be no exception. Therefore, the selection of the cases was based on individual teacher characteristics which I was interested in studying and not on stereotyped teacher profiles or contexts.

The three particular features which the units of analysis needed to have were: full qualification in ELT or any related fields (BA or more), at least ten years of L2 teaching experience in state schools, and proven engagement in teacher development courses. A fourth prerequisite was that they were currently working at a state secondary school, where they would be expected to deal with the aforesaid contextual realities and where observations would be carried out. Cortázar School turned out to be an excellent institutional option since not only

did it comply with all the requirements of a state secondary school but its entire EFL teaching staff met the characteristics pursued in this project and, therefore, represented potential participants for the study. After a meeting with all members of staff of the EFL department (one head of department and ten teachers), three agreed to participate voluntarily and gave their written consent.

Three methods had been administered with the three teachers (Emma, Sophia, and Lucy) when, soon before observations started, Lucy was forced to discontinue her participation since she had to go on a six-month leave due to problems in her vocal cords. Lucy's withdrawal from the study was a great disappointment. She and I had established a good rapport in the first interview and through e-mail communication and we were both very excited about her participation in the project. Moreover, this teacher made a special contribution to the study since, unlike Emma and Sophia, she was not a teacher trainer and had specialised exclusively in teaching young learners. In addition, I was concerned that two case studies might not generate sufficient data. The research project thus consisted of two participants (see 4.4.2 and 4.4.3) and, fortunately, it produced rich information about the phenomena and issues under study.

#### **4.4.2 Emma**

Emma was born in Argentina in 1952 and has lived in this country for almost fifty years. She has also lived and worked in Spain (7 years, 1975-1982), the UK (3 months, 1975) and the USA (6 months, 2000-2001). She speaks Spanish as a mother tongue and English as a foreign language (see 5.2).

Emma holds BA degrees in ELT, English-Spanish translation, and English philology. Until 2004, she focused on her development as an EFL teacher, attending seminars, courses, and workshops, and giving presentations at conferences mostly in relation to discourse analysis, grammar, and lexis; materials design; syllabus design; reading strategies; and literature teaching. Since 2004 she has specialised in literature and all her conference talks, research, and publications have been connected with this field. She is currently completing her MA in Latin American Literature at a national university in Argentina. Her main areas of interest include discourse analysis, grammar, lexis, skills development, and literature.

Emma has taught EFL for more than 35 years. At the moment she is associate professor at an EFL TTC at a national university in Argentina. She

gives lectures on oral and written discourse and advanced English. She also holds a tenured position as an EFL teacher at Cortázar School, where she has worked since 1987. Her responsibilities in this school include: teaching EFL classes; designing syllabi, materials, and tests; testing; and running extra-curricular workshops.

#### **4.4.3 Sophia**

Sophia was born in Argentina in 1955 and has lived in this country for more than fifty years. She has also lived and studied part of her secondary school in Canada (2 years, late 1960s or early 1970s). She speaks Spanish as a mother tongue and English as a foreign language (see 6.2).

Sophia holds a BA in ELT. Since 1985 she has taken postgraduate courses on EFL teaching, reading comprehension, syllabus and curriculum design, second language acquisition, history and sociology, and higher education. She is currently studying for an MA in Language Education and Literature at a national university in Argentina. She has also given conference talks or run courses and workshops in the following areas: reading comprehension, assessment and testing, reflective teaching, literature teaching in ELT, motivation, didactics, and discourse analysis. Her main areas of interest include ELT methodology, specifically skills development, assessment and testing, and the teaching of EFL to children and adolescents.

Sophia has taught EFL for more than 30 years. At the moment she is associate professor at an EFL TTC at a national university in Argentina. She gives lectures on ELT methodology and teaching practice. She also holds a tenured position as an EFL teacher at Cortázar School, where she has worked since 2004. Her responsibilities in this school include: teaching EFL classes; designing syllabi, materials, and tests; testing; and running extra-curricular workshops. Moreover, she has worked as an EFL teacher at a primary and secondary school since 2003. Finally, she is an oral examiner in the English language tests administered by Cambridge University (KET, PET, FCE, CAE, and CPE).

#### **4.5 Data analysis**

No single model or reference was used to devise the approach to data analysis adopted in this study but a combination of many: Spradley's *domain*

*analysis* (Spradley, 1979); Strauss' *open, axial, and selective coding* (Strauss, 1987); Rubin and Rubin's stages for coding interview data (Rubin and Rubin, 1995); Kvale's steps of interview analysis and approaches to the analysis of meaning (Kvale, 1996); Boyatzis' ideas for the formation of theme and category clusters (Boyatzis, 1998); Creswell's description of holistic, embedded, within-case, and cross-case analyses (Creswell, 2007); and Yin's analytic techniques (Yin, 2009).

A distinction should be drawn between the analysis of the data gathered through the grammaticality judgement task and of those collected through the rest of the methods. In the case of the former, the teachers' corrections were examined in relation to the four tasks they had been asked to complete: 1. identify the grammar mistakes, 2. provide the correct grammar version of each faulty part, 3. name the grammar aspect in each correction, and 4. explain the grammatical rule which they thought had been broken. The results obtained were then categorised. In the case of Emma, for instance, the data were arranged into the following emerging categories and sub-categories: corrections (mistakes identified and corrected, mistakes not identified, mistakes identified but not corrected, unnecessary correction, wrong correction, lack of confidence), grammatical terminology (mentioned, not mentioned, wrong), and explanations (complete, no or incomplete, wrong) (see sample in Appendix 3). In other words, the analysis of the data generated through the grammaticality judgement task consisted of two stages: examination of the teachers' corrections and the categorisation of the results.

In the case of the rest of the methods, the material was first analysed thematically and then codified. Although this represents a departure from some widely used procedures (e.g., grounded theory), where themes emerge at a late stage in the analysis following open and axial coding, it allowed due weight to be given to the categorisation which informed the research questions and offered a way of dealing with the complexity and interrelatedness of teacher cognition.

A chart was created with three columns: 1. *raw data*, 2. *theme(s)*, and 3. *codes, comments, and insights* (see sample in Appendix 4). First, the data were linked to pre-conceived themes which were derived from the research questions of the study [salient grammar teaching features (research question 1); PLLEs, KAG, and GRPK (research question 2); and CFs (research question 3)], though some other topics emerged such as teachers' knowledge of learners, syllabus,

and context; teachers' beliefs and perceptions; teachers' personal and professional history; information about the school; and the effect of the study on the teachers and their teaching practices. This thematic analysis was not an easy task, especially because teachers' cognitive bases cannot always be seen as separate and discrete. As Nilsson points out, "a limitation with analysis based on 'separate knowledge bases' [...] is that, given the complexity and intermingling of participants' knowledge, thoughts, ideas, and practice in the process of teaching, although analysis assumes that the knowledge bases are completely separate and distinct, in reality they are combined in a complex web" [sic] (2008: 1288). Second, the data chunks associated with specific themes were codified. This process generated codes, comments, and insights which further specified the nature of the themes in the second column.

Once all the data had been analysed thematically and codified, the codes, comments and insights associated with similar themes (e.g., GRPK) were grouped in a separate document. Within each theme, these codes, comments and insights were examined in detail and arranged into categories. When categories had been derived within each theme, the material was further analysed within and across the categories. This resulted in a new categorisation of the data, in which several previous categories had merged into one, some others had been eliminated, and some new ones had emerged. Rubin and Rubin claim that "examining the material in individual categories allows you to refine what a concept means, compare examples of a theme, or piece together the separate events in a narrative", and add that "comparing material across categories allows you to figure out which themes seem to go together or contradict each other" (1995: 241). Subsequently, a detailed description and interpretation of the data in each category were provided. During this process, the categories were again subject to some modifications and a final set of categories was produced. The description was often illustrated with quotes from the participants and with a brief reference to their context of occurrence. This required that I examine the raw data again and ensure that all evidence was grounded in the data. In short, this approach to data analysis involved four definite processes: thematic analysis, codification, categorisation, and description and interpretation of data. These processes were iterative in nature, with themes, codes, and categories being constantly relabelled, redefined, eliminated, reconsidered, regrouped, etc.

Data analysis and description were carried out first within each case (*within-case analysis*). Then, a comparison of categories across the two cases (*cross-case analysis*) was made, which produced an answer to research issue A. Finally, there was an interpretive phase in which I engaged in a discussion of the relationships among PLLEs, KAG, GRPK, and CFs in relation to the teachers' salient grammar teaching features (research issue B).

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a comprehensive discussion of the paradigmatic and methodological considerations underlying this study. I now move on to describe the research findings.

## CHAPTER V EMMA

The description of the research findings in Chapters V (Emma) and VI (Sophia) is organised into the themes contained in research questions 1, 2, and 3 and, within each theme, into the categories which were derived from the data collected. **Table 9** provides a graphic representation of the main structure of Chapters V and VI in relation to the research questions of this study. This structure allows the reader to obtain a general picture of the teachers' overall grammar teaching approach and practices before he/she engages in understanding how their PLLEs, KAG, GRPK, and CFs are associated with particular features of such approach and practices.

**Table 9:** Location of answers to research questions 1-3

Research Question (RQ)	Theme	Section(s)	
		Emma	Sophia
<b>RQ1:</b> How do the teachers approach grammar in their particular contexts? What are the distinguishing characteristics of their grammar teaching practices?	Grammar approach and grammar teaching practices	5.1	6.1
<b>RQ2:</b> Are these practices associated with their PLLEs, KAG, and GRPK? If so, how?	PLLEs	5.2	6.2
	KAG	5.3	6.3
	GRPK	5.4	6.4
<b>RQ3:</b> What role do CFs play in shaping these grammar teaching practices?	CFs	5.5	6.5

Throughout the description, the following conventions are used to locate the information provided by these teachers and other staff members within the data corpus: stimulated recall (**SR**; this includes extracts from classroom events and follow-up interviews; **E** refers to the episode within a SR session), first interview (**I1**), final interview (**I2**), autobiographical account (**AA**), teacher diary (**TD**), grammaticality judgement task (**GJT**), staff interviews (**SI**), and document analysis (**DA**). In class extracts where the teacher or the students used Spanish and in quotations from interviews, diary entries, and autobiographical accounts where the participants spoke in Spanish, I provided my own translation (indicated as '**my translation**' immediately after the source).

**Table 10** contains a summary of Emma's grammar teaching practices in the ten classes observed and includes information about the tasks, teacher actions, grammar content, and the people involved in each grammar episode.

**Table 10:** Emma's grammar teaching practices

Class / Episode	Task(s)	Teacher action(s)	Grammar content	People involved
1 / 1	Class warm-up	Explaining (incidental teaching)	'worth' + V-ing	T + class
1 / 2	Role-play	Correcting + explaining	Present simple vs. Past simple	T + class
1 / 3	Role-play	Correcting	Plural nouns	T + st
1 / 4-7	Role-play	Correcting / not correcting	Tenses, adjectives	T + class
1 / 8	Role-play: feedback	Correcting + explaining (incidental teaching)	'should' in perfective form	T + st
1 / 9	Open cloze	Giving instructions	Linking words	T + class
1 / 10	Open cloze: feedback	Correcting + explaining	'after that' vs. 'suddenly' – 'just then'	T + class
1 / 11	Open cloze: feedback	Explaining	'at last' vs. 'in the end'	T + class
2 / 1	Grammar presentation	Presenting	'used to' – 'would'	T + class
2 / 2	Controlled practice	Giving instructions	'used to' – 'would'	T + class
2 / 3	Feedback	Eliciting uses	'used to' – 'would'	T + class
2 / 4	Practice	Responding st's question	'would' (negative form)	T + st
2 / 5	Practice	Explaining	'would': conditional vs. past habit	T + st
2 / 6	Grammar presentation	Eliciting uses + presenting	'used to' – 'would'	T + class
2 / 7	Grammar presentation	Presenting + giving examples	'used to' – 'would'	T + class
2 / 8	Grammar presentation	Explaining	'used to' vs. 'would' state verbs	T + class
2 / 9	Practice	Responding st's question	'look': state verb vs. action verb	T + st
2 / 10	Practice	Responding st's question	'would': conditional vs. past habit	T + class
3 / 1	Unit presentation	Explaining	'go on a + transport' vs. 'go by + transport'	T + class
3 / 2	Practice	Giving instructions	Word categories: noun vs. verb	T + class
4 / 1-2	Reading comprehension	Correcting, eliciting info & lang., explaining (incidental teaching)	'would': future in past vs. conditional	T + class



5 / 1	Quiz	Testing	'used to' – 'would'	T + class
6 / 1	Grammar presentation	Presenting, explaining, giving examples	Present perfect continuous (PPC)	T + class
6 / 2	Feedback	Checking answers	Present perfect simple (PPS) vs. PPC	T + class
6 / 3	Feedback	Eliciting uses	PPS vs. PPC	T + class
6 / 4	Error correction (re writing)	Correcting, eliciting info, explaining	'decided to went', 'arrive to'	T + class
7 / 1	Practice, feedback	Eliciting answers, explaining	PPS vs. PPC	T + class
7 / 2	Revision	Explaining, revising	PPS vs. PPC: rules	T + class
7 / 3	Practice	Explaining	PPS vs. PPC: rules	T + class
7 / 4	Feedback	Checking answers	PPS vs. PPC	T + class
8 / 1	Practice	Providing practice	PPS vs. PPC	T + class
8 / 2	Practice	Providing instructions	PPS vs. PPC	T + class
8 / 3	Practice	Checking answers	PPS vs. PPC: uses	T + class
8 / 4	Practice	Providing extra practice	PPS vs. PPC	T + class
8 / 5	Practice	Responding sts' questions, explaining	PPS vs. PPC	T + st T + class
8 / 6	Practice	Eliciting answers & uses	PPS vs. PPC	T + class
8 / 7	Practice	Eliciting answers & uses	PPS vs. PPC, state verbs	T + class
8 / 8	Practice	Eliciting context	PPC	T + st
9	-	-	-	-
10	-	-	-	-

## 5.1 Grammar approach and grammar teaching practices

### 5.1.1 ELT at Cortázar School

Emma claims that EFL teachers at Cortázar School enjoy complete freedom to design their class syllabi, which means they receive no pressure from the institution as to the type of syllabus they should use or the content, materials, and methodology information they should include. The decision on what kind of syllabus they will follow is agreed by all the members of the ELT department. Emma explains that back in 1995, after their tenure-track exams, all the teachers agreed to devise a content-based syllabus in which the teaching of grammar was only incidental. After some years, they realised that a content-based syllabus failed to produce satisfactory results since the teachers made a lot of effort in the preparation of tasks and materials but the students did not reach a good level. Concerned about their poor production in exams, the learners started to demand the teaching of specific linguistic items which could help them to improve their L2

production. The teachers then agreed to select a textbook and to draw up a book-based syllabus. Emma justifies this decision claiming that a textbook somehow ensures that the quality of its contents and tasks is good as it has been written by experts and usually recycles linguistic items throughout the book. Nowadays, EFL teachers at Cortázar School use a book series called *New Opportunities* (Harris et al., 2006; Mugglestone, P., 2006; and Sharman et al., 2006) along the different levels (approximately half a book per level or academic year). According to Emma, grammar plays a very important role in every unit and is always prioritised by the teachers among the language aspects they agree to focus on. **(I1, pp. 20-22; SI)**

Unsatisfactory results with content-based teaching, the learners' request for grammar and vocabulary instruction, and the decision to follow a syllabus based on a coursebook with a strong grammatical component turned EFL classes at Cortázar School from content-based into grammar-based. Nowadays, in Emma's classes, grammar is taught regularly and basically at the sentence level. Little attention is paid to grammatical structures at the level of discourse, the teaching of which is incidental and not systematic. In their compositions, students are required to include some discrete grammar items such as specific tenses they are studying at the moment. Grammar is always corrected in the students' writings, which, according to Emma, makes writing correction less subjective. She also explains that grammar instruction provides "accountability", in other words, it offers something 'tangible' for the learners to study and for the teachers to test their students on. Naturally, tests are predominantly grammar-based, which teachers see as an advantage since this allows those teaching the same level of students both to agree easily on what grammar content and tasks to include and what correction criteria to apply and, thus, to design and use the same test in different classes. **(I1, pp. 6-8; SI)**

Though she openly acknowledges she likes grammar and favours grammar teaching in her classes, Emma thinks that EFL teachers at Cortázar School sometimes speak too much about grammar as if it were the only aspect to teach **(I1, p. 6)**. She also maintains that grammar teaching in her classes is not intended to help students to improve their English but to assist her "weakest" language learners:

Some students would be very good speakers of English and maybe you can recognise a couple of girls but I know that they have come to my class being good speakers, probably because they go to an institute and they find English [...] attractive to them as a subject. [...] If you ask me if by teaching them grammar I'm enhancing their English, I don't think so. I think that with my teaching of grammar I'm helping and I'm giving someone a structured context to function. And maybe those are the students that feel ... that don't feel so interested in the language. That would be the weakest students. [...] Then there are couple of students who don't really show very good knowledge of the language but they are very talkative [...]. They can communicate so so, they can write more or less, but, well, maybe they learn just that. Again, I don't think I'm helping them with my teaching of grammar in that case (**I2, pp. 10-11**)

Emma's view of the limited usefulness of grammar instruction does not seem to coincide with either the value the learners themselves give to the learning of linguistic items (i.e. they explicitly demand the teaching of grammar and vocabulary which might help them become better language users, **I1, p. 20**) or the central role given to grammar instruction and, consequently, the heavy load of grammar work in this teacher's class.

In short, the grammar-based nature of classes at Cortázar School is justified by Emma on the basis of the unsatisfactory results which EFL teachers at this school obtained with a different type of approach (content-based) and on the practicalities it entails at the moment of agreeing on contents for syllabus and test design and criteria for test correction. In Emma's particular case, grammar teaching is not vindicated by the language learning benefits it brings to a whole class of learners but by the support it lends to the "weakest" students. In subsequent sections it will be seen that her decision to teach grammar also seems to derive from the nature of her personality, professional background, teaching beliefs, academic abilities, and personal preferences.

### 5.1.2 Teacher style and beliefs

Class observation and interviews revealed that one of the most distinctive features of Emma's teaching is her tendency to control all aspects of her classes. Fully aware of this behaviour, Emma mentioned that, though she is not happy with this aspect about herself, she still tries to be in charge of everything that goes on in the classroom for she does not like it when her class gets out of control. When asked to define 'out of control', she answered:

Out of control that I feel that they are not doing what they are supposed to do, that they are not speaking in English while they do the activity, [...] out of control would mean that something takes longer than what I had planned. And out of control would mean that when I plan something fun or what I thought would be fun, the students get bored (**I2, p. 6**).

This answer might indicate that her inclination to control the teaching-learning process originates, to a certain degree, in her concern with whether the learners seize the opportunities they have in class to practise and to use the target language, with whether there is enough time to carry out tasks (see 5.5.1), and with whether her planned actions or activities have the affective impact she expects them to have. Additionally, her necessity to exercise control springs from the satisfaction she derives when she makes sure both that the students have understood or learned some language items and that they will eventually do well in exams. This, in turn, allows her to gain the students' affection and recognition, as is revealed in the following extract:

**I:** And what do you think would happen if things went out of control?

**E:** [she smiles] Erm ... Not much, but every teacher would like to be liked. I mean, you want to, I don't know if all the teachers, but I want my students to think that I'm a good teacher.

**I:** So you think that by controlling things they might think you're a good teacher.

**E:** Or I would be satisfied with my class. That would be the most important ... consequence of being satisfied with the control I exert on the class, that I'm satisfied and I think 'well, I carried out a very interesting activity and everybody learned one ... English expression, and most of them understood it and in the exam they are going to do well'. That would be satisfying for me. And that means by doing that the students will think that I'm a good teacher or whatever you personally think. And then ... if it goes out of control, well I think that I'm not doing a good job (**I2, p. 6**)

Emma also added that, in relation to incidental grammar instruction, she feels things get out of control if she is unable to explain some language features. Even though she enjoys the surprising factor in a class such as the emergence of unplanned topics for discussion, she acknowledges that unexpected questions or challenging comments usually make her feel uneasy, especially in higher levels, as she feels she cannot control the students asking more and more complex

questions. She claims she is aware of her limits and that this is the reason why she cannot teach beyond first or second year at the TTC at university (**I2, pp. 9-10**). Andrews and McNeill (2005) list “awareness of the extent of their own subject-matter knowledge” as one of the characteristics of the TLA of ‘good language teachers’ (2005: 174). This self-awareness comes along with a desire to further develop their TLA (*ibid.*), which is manifest in Emma, for instance, in the many teacher development courses on discourse analysis, grammar, and lexis she has taken (**DA**) (see 4.4.2). Considering that Emma claims she is confident about her KAG at the level she is teaching (**SR2, overall questions**) and that she feels comfortable teaching grammar (**I1, p. 22**), it is not surprising that her classes have a major component of grammar work. Grammar instruction, therefore, serves a two-fold purpose: it allows her to feel she is able to be in control of the teaching-learning process and, since the students expect to be taught linguistic aspects to develop as language learners and to do well in tests, it gives her teaching face validity in the eyes of the students.

In line with her tendency to control is Emma’s belief that the teacher plays a key role in the teaching-learning process. Among the teacher’s responsibilities, she argues it is fundamental that a secondary school language teacher should be concise (this quality is also found in the three secondary school teachers in Pahissa and Tragant, 2009), have the capacity to summarise and select the most relevant language features, and make the students play with the language, but he/she should also keep authority, for instance, by making sure the learners do their tasks and by marking their work (**I1, p. 23**). In relation to grammar teaching, Emma states:

I feel comfortable [teaching grammar]. I know how long my explanations should take; they are concise but they are ... I also provide clear explanations. I have come up with the quickest way to ... the shortest rule to say how a particular tense is used, and then I give grammar practice so that students can use a more inductive method and can consolidate grammar rules (**I1, p. 22; my translation**)

This extract unveils Emma’s concern for offering concise and intelligible explanations. This concern frequently leads the teacher to over-simplify grammatical rules and terminology, sometimes to the point of leading the learners to misunderstand or misuse these language features (see 5.3 and 5.4).

Her interest in clarity is also reflected in the way she always makes content and objectives explicit in presentations, explanations, and task instructions, a teaching behaviour which most probably derives from her own negative language learning experiences at university (see 5.2.3). She states that she dislikes ambiguity and that the lack of clear objectives in teaching can frustrate students, for instance, when they fail exams because they have not been overtly informed about the language items they will be tested on (**I1, pp. 13-14**): “I try to make students realise, when I’m teaching a class, if something is simply a comment or if it’s something that will be tested. If it will be included in a test, I repeat it; I make it explicit several times in class” (**I1, p. 13; my translation**). She acknowledges, though, that her desire to aid clarity to her teaching often results in her sounding too domineering and too repetitive (**I2, p. 6**). Repetition is a technique this teacher typically employs in her classes (see 5.4.2 C). Whether to foster students’ understanding, to make her teaching explicit, or as a touch of humour, Emma consistently repeats rules, structures, examples, instructions, definitions, and potential contents for future tests or writing tasks.

Pedagogically speaking, Emma combines a concern for innovating with new ideas, especially in relation to skills development (**I1, p. 19**), and for recycling old techniques, such as drilling, which she found effective as a language learner (**I1, p. 16**) (see 5.2). These traditional techniques, she argues, are not reproduced naively but filtered to meet her teaching goals and integrated in her classes in an informed way (**I1, p. 17**). This willingness to re-examine and incorporate aspects of traditional methods was also observed in Eric, a qualified and experienced EFL teacher in Borg (1998a, 1999a). Like Eric, Emma appears to have developed her own personal pedagogy with the purpose of meeting the demands of her particular instructional context. Two further characteristics about Emma are revealed: her readiness to let experience shape her teaching and her constant reflection along the years on what she thinks works best for her classes, regardless of whether her teaching decisions follow or go against current methodological trends. This capacity to engage in reflective practice is one of the qualities of expert teachers outlined by Tsui, and involves “making explicit the tacit knowledge that is gained from experience”, a faculty which she refers to as “theorizing practical knowledge” (2009: 429) (see 5.1.3).

In view of Emma's tendency to control things, her fears for not being able to respond to questions and comments during impromptu grammar work, her view of a teacher's duties and of the type of teaching which might make students value a teacher, her preference for making content and objectives explicit, and her readiness for recycling and employing traditional methods, it seems natural to observe in her classes that her grammar teaching is almost exclusively deductive, that her grammar presentations are always teacher-fronted, that the discussions she engages her students in are mainly teacher-led, that the tasks she selects are all guided and controlled, and that the nature of her classroom dynamics is invariably teacher-centred.

### 5.1.3 Experience

The influence of experience on Emma's teaching practices is clearly evident in the data. Firstly, in her presentation of tenses, she focuses on one or two uses because she knows from experience that secondary school students can handle a limited amount of information at a time and, therefore, that teaching all uses of one tense is complicated for them (**SR8, E1**). For instance, to help the learners understand the difference between present perfect simple (PPS) and present perfect continuous (PPC), she selects one use of each tense, usually the ones she thinks will better allow her to differentiate the two tenses (**ibid.**), and compares the two uses, even though the textbook discusses three uses of the latter tense. After she has made sure the students grasp the difference between the tenses and their uses, she introduces new ones (**SR6, E1**). This example illustrates the interplay of different knowledge categories in grammar teaching practice: subject matter (PPS and PPC), context (secondary school), learners (school students), and pedagogy (grading level of difficulty) (see e.g., Andrews, 2007; Hashweh, 2005; Johnston and Goettsch, 2000). Secondly, Emma claims that her teaching experience has helped her to develop anticipation skills. When introducing a new grammatical item, she is able to anticipate students' questions, mistakes, and some problems that may arise (**SR3, E2**). This allows her to be better prepared to provide further explanations and examples and to filter the information the students receive from the textbook (**SR1, E1; SR3, E2**). Two qualities of the TLA of 'good language teachers' are mentioned here: "awareness of learners' potential difficulties" and "awareness of their own key role in mediating input for learning" (Andrews and McNeill, 2005: 174). Despite her 34

years of teaching experience, Emma states she cannot anticipate everything and that each year there is always something new to add to her knowledge (**SR3, E1**). The problem is that, when planning a class, she sometimes relies so much on her teaching experience that she does not prepare classes meticulously and ends up providing unnecessary explanations or examples to avoid potential problems or mistakes (**SR3, E2**). In such cases, she takes actions which are exclusively informed by her experience and not by the materials she is using to teach. For example, thinking that it would help students to complete their exercise, she once introduced the plural form ‘travels’ as the most common use of ‘travel’ as a noun, when, in fact, the exercise required learners to use the singular form as in ‘space travel’. Finally, Emma shows some readiness to transfer experience from one teaching context to another. For instance, while introducing the uses of ‘used to’ and ‘would’, Emma spontaneously thought it was a good idea to invite her secondary school students to act as teachers and teach her some rules, an idea which she had already used at university with her teacher trainees (**SR2, E2**). Though the learners seemed to be willing and motivated to explain the rules to Emma as if they were her teachers, in the end she retained her role as the teacher and ended up eliciting information from the students (see 5.1.8). The first and second examples in this section illustrate how a professional factor (experience) influences, mostly positively, the application of the teacher’s KAG (see Andrews, 2007: 42-43).

#### 5.1.4 Class plans

Despite her tendency to control the teaching-learning process, her methodical personality, and the systematic nature of her classroom behaviour, Emma appears to plan her classes only partially. In the following extract Emma provides some of the reasons for not planning classes thoroughly:

**E:** [...] when I go to class, sometimes I have a glimpse of what I’m going to do, something like ‘OK, today’s the past’, and I go into the classroom or I start the class and, suddenly, I realise that I haven’t prepared the class so thoroughly [...]

**I:** And why do you do so? I mean, why is it that you go into the classroom ...

**E:** Erm ... many reasons maybe. Erm ... Because I trust that to be spontaneous is less boring [...]

**I:** It’s less boring for you.



**E:** Less boring for me. Not necessarily for the students. Erm ... something like OK the unexpected will come during the class and will be a challenge. I don't know if I really analyse that in my brain. I know that I don't want to go through many things before the class for reasons probably because ... because I imagine that something happened before that when I planned everything to the very last minute and suddenly the class disappointed me because it didn't turn up as I had planned. That could be something very personal by which I plan things and, when they don't turn as I plan them, I get very disappointed. So nowadays, personally, I try not to plan many things. [...] The other reason would be that one day I don't want to plan classes and I'm lazy and that day I want to read a book at home or do something **(I2, p. 1)**

Emma gives three reasons for not preparing classes thoroughly: first, because going to classes relatively unprepared is less boring and allows her to be spontaneous and meet some challenges; second, because she got disappointed several times in the past when classes did not turn out as she had planned them; and, finally, because she sometimes feels lazy **(ibid.)**. Considering her fear for losing control and not being able to respond to students' questions and comments, the first reason appears to be surprising.

Emma claims she used to plan classes more meticulously when she first started teaching but, nowadays, she prepares her lessons in detail only when she is getting acquainted with a new textbook. She does all the exercises in the unit she is going to teach when she first uses the class book, but does not go through all the exercises when using the book again **(SR3, E2)**. In spite of this, she feels she has the necessary experience and skills to teach a good class all the same **(I2, p. 2)**. For each class, she flips through the unit she is going to teach to decide what content to focus on and what tasks to make the students work on **(SR2, E2; SR3, E2)**, but she never plans how she is going to teach these language features **(SR2, E2)**. This coincides with Hashweh's findings about experienced teachers planning far less than inexperienced ones because the former are able to draw on pedagogical constructions developed through experience (see Hashweh, 2005). However, in the classes observed, it could be seen that not reading the exercises carefully before the class had some impact on her teaching practices. First, on one occasion she supplied task instructions which were inaccurate and, therefore, misleading. She asked the students to complete a story with the 'expressions of time' provided by the textbook in the instructions to the exercise. She did not realise, though, that the words or phrases that the students had to

use were actually 'linking words' which, in addition to expressions of time, included other adverbials such as 'luckily' and 'somehow' (**SR1, E9**). As a result, some learners did not use these two adverbs because they were not 'expressions of time'. Second, she provided confusing feedback on task answers on two occasions. In class 6, the students had to match three tense uses to either PPS or PPC based on the examples they had completed in the previous exercise. When eliciting the answers from the learners, Emma accepted as correct a learner's response in which he matched one of the uses to past simple and not to any of the two tenses which were the focus of the lesson. She then acknowledged in the SR session that this had happened because she had only given a quick look at what the instructions said and the examples the students had to refer to (**SR6, E3**). In class 7, the learners had to complete a gapped exercise with either PPS or PPC. In one of the answers, Emma got confused, probably because she had not read the text carefully, and accepted the students' suggestion that both tenses were correct, when only PPS was possible (**SR7, E4**). Finally, as was explained above, she once ended up providing unnecessary actions which were not informed by the materials she was using (see previous section).

### 5.1.5 Selection of grammar content

Every year, Emma and her colleagues agree on the minimum grammar points they are going to cover in their classes, which are selected from all the grammatical items included in the textbook units and which are eventually used in tests. Each teacher, however, is free to focus on some grammatical aspects more than on others and to add any linguistic content they wish to teach (**SI**). In Emma's case, her selection of grammar content is not made at random but meets certain criteria. First, her decision is based on how confident she feels with her own knowledge of the language item (**SR1, E1**). That is, her confidence with language awareness is the factor influencing her selection of content. Second, she chooses items on the basis of the way they are treated in the textbook and on whether this treatment meets her teaching goals (**ibid.**). For instance, in her diary she once wrote: "I don't really like the next grammar point as it is planned in the textbook. I think this verb tense – Present Perfect Progressive – does not match the discourse expectations I have of the unit = narration of an accident while travelling" (**TD**). Third, she selects some grammatical points if other teachers have decided to deal with them as well (**SR1, E1**). In this case, her

selection is motivated by a contextual factor. Fourth, she chooses those language items which she thinks are potentially useful for learners and which she knows they will be able to grasp. Her decision, therefore, is based on the students' language needs and on their capacity to acquire new content. For instance, she thinks that most modal verbs have many shades of meaning, which makes them hard to use, test, or contextualise. Consequently, when teaching modal verbs, she always selects the ones she considers most relevant and, within each case, she uses that are most common and easiest for the students to understand (*ibid.*):

The modals are very difficult for [the students] to grasp. And they have so many shades of meaning that the grammar point is very difficult to, not to explain, sometimes to really use it well. Sometimes it is difficult to evaluate because imagine if you plan a fill out the blanks exercise sometimes the context has to be so so specific so as to produce 'must have been' instead of 'might've been' that sometimes we don't see the importance or we don't see the point. We don't see the point of making the students go through those very subtle shades of meaning. So the modals is one of them. The context is very difficult; we have to produce longer contexts. [...] It's *not* easy to grasp so that is something that maybe we go through quickly and we pick up only the most important ones (*ibid.*).

This criterion illustrates how different pedagogical knowledge domains guide this experienced teacher's decisions and teaching practices: "Handling Language Items" (e.g., deciding how much information to provide), "Factoring in Student Contributions" (in this case, their needs and abilities), and "Determining the Contents of Teaching" (Gatbonton, 1999: 42-43). It also shows Emma's tendency to simplify content, which was briefly discussed above and will be further explored in 5.3 and 5.4. Fifth, she prioritises the teaching of active rather than passive language aspects. This means that she decides to teach structures which are commonly used and leaves aside exceptional cases. As an example of active language she thinks of 'travels' as a plural noun (e.g., 'we visited wonderful places in our travels around the world'), as opposed to its passive counterpart 'travel', used as a singular noun (e.g., 'air/rail/space travel' or 'my duties involve a fair amount of travel') (see 5.5.1 C). Finally, in relation to the contents included in the syllabus and agreed with her colleagues, Emma focuses on the aspects which are commonly used in examples and exercises in the textbook and which

will be tested in exams (**SR7, E3; SR8, E1**). This might suggest that her classes are, to a large extent, intended to prepare the learners for the type of practice the students will be exposed to in the course materials and in tests. This section shows that attitudinal (confidence), contextual (students, other staff members, tests, materials), and professional (experience and knowledge) factors influence the application of Emma's KAG in course-lesson preparation (in this case, the selection of content) (see Andrews, 2007: 42-43).

### 5.1.6 Explicit grammar teaching

Grammar teaching practices are consistently explicit in Emma's classes. Grammar rules, forms, and examples are openly explained and discussed in the presentation stage and throughout the lessons. In her opinion, several reasons justify her explicit approach to grammar instruction. First, she claims that explicit grammar teaching is clearer and more focused than communicative presentations (**SR6, E1**). She thinks that students need to know the rationale for what they say (**SR2, overall questions**), which allows them to make an informed use of the language. Second, the textbook suggests explicit grammar instruction (**SR1, E2**). This might reveal an interest, on Emma's part, in seeking to adopt an approach and teaching materials which adhere to the same pedagogical principles. Third, she considers that, when grammar is taught explicitly, the learners understand rules more easily and are able to move on quickly to the practice stage (**SR2, overall questions**). This indicates that explicit grammar teaching is time-saving and, therefore, more appropriate for a context with time constraints (see 5.5.1). Finally, Emma thinks that explicit grammar teaching is more "accountable".

Accountable in the sense that it is there; they cannot go wrong if they are doubtful about ... it has been explicitly said in class, exercised, nobody later on can say 'well, but I didn't understand it'. Because then I would say 'but we said it in class'. Maybe that's what I have in mind, which I don't know if it is good or bad. And we discussed it together and I remember the date or the examples (**ibid.**)

This means that, inasmuch as grammar items are overtly discussed and exercised in class, she makes sure that everybody understands and practises all the language features they need in order to do well in tests.

### 5.1.7 Grammar presentations

Emma's grammar presentations are essentially explicit, deductive, and teacher-centred. She claims her presentations are academic, not communicative, and compares them with those in a maths, history, or sociology class: "the student knows from the start that we are dealing with a grammar point, that he has to pay attention to the explanation as if it were the first explanation of one topic in class, a topic or a concept in mathematics or the first explanation of a teacher of a concept in history or sociology whatever, whichever subject they are dealing with" (**SR6, E1**). This comparison might suggest that she is conscious she is teaching at a secondary school, which may motivate her to use an approach which resembles those adopted in other subjects. This discloses the interaction of two knowledge categories: knowledge of context and knowledge of pedagogy (e.g., Andrews, 2007; Hashweh, 2005).

The overall structure of her presentations is: first, she uses a *focusing* technique to introduce the new grammatical item; second, she provides the *name* of the structure; third, she outlines its different *forms* (affirmative, negative, interrogative); fourth, she describes its main *uses* (examples are provided and elicited); and, finally, she engages the learners in a *discussion in their L1* to explain the structure or to compare it in both languages, L1 and L2. Though she was not aware of the structure of her presentations, she acknowledges she always uses the same stages and in the same order (**ibid.**). She thinks that the main strength of this type of presentation is that she quickly draws the students' attention to the focus of the class and to her explanations (**ibid.**). The focusing stage, for which she often uses the textbook as a 'warm up' (**ibid.**), allows her to structure the rest of the class (**SR2, E1**). Names, forms, and rules are made explicit and transmitted by the teacher. Though most of the times she provides the examples herself, usually by using the students' names and their classroom context as a touch of humour, she sometimes invites learners to give their own examples (see 5.4.2 A). Finally, she checks understanding by asking the students to provide, if possible, L1 equivalents (see 5.4.2 B). The nature of her presentations is consistent with her personality, style, and beliefs.

### 5.1.8 Inductive grammar teaching

All the grammar teaching practices observed in the classes are undoubtedly deductive in nature, except for two instances, one of which can

arguably be regarded as inductive whereas the other one intended to be so but ended up being deductive. She claims that, as the learners have a good language level, they are prepared for inductive learning (**SR2, E2**). On one occasion, while checking the answers to some exercises, Emma asked the students to think over the distinction between the two tenses being used. She thought that, after being exposed to the language through exercises, the learners would be able to infer the uses of the tenses by themselves. However, in the end, the students were given the list of uses, which were included in the textbook, and were asked to match them to the exercises previously done. Moreover, these exercises actually involved some of the uses which the teacher had already introduced in her presentation (**SR6**). On the other occasion, Emma asked the students to work on some exercises in pairs or small groups and to infer the rule for using 'used to'. She told them that after completing the exercises, they were going to act as teachers and teach her the rule. Though this task did involve inductive learning, the original learner-centred idea eventually turned into a teacher-led discussion with Emma acting as the teacher and eliciting information from the learners (**SR2**).

### 5.1.9 Incidental teaching of a language item

Emma rarely engages in the incidental teaching of language points but, when she does so, this is based more on lexical expressions than on grammatical aspects. When a new grammatical item emerges spontaneously, the teacher decides to focus on it if she knows from experience that the students might need it or find it useful in the future (**SR1, E1**). She explains the way she usually treats incidental language items:

... whenever I produce or the students produce some language that is new, that I know it is new, I stress it, I emphasise it, I explain the meaning or I translate it, and sometimes I produce like the two or three uses or how it can be used and that's it. Over. I'm not going to evaluate it. But I know that the students will remember. Sometimes, by the end of the semester, I make a game, I design a game, and, if I have written these words right away in my notebook, I will [...] include them [...] in that game; maybe for the sake of the students remembering (**ibid.**)

In the classes observed, there were only three instances of incidental grammar teaching, the content of which had emerged the first time from the teacher's talk

('worth + V-ing' in class 1), and the other times from the students' mistakes (use of 'should', instead of 'must', in the perfective form in class 1; and use of 'would' to show future in the past in class 4). Though in the final interview Emma claimed that she was happy with the incidental grammar teaching provided (**I2, p. 9**), the rare occasions on which she undertakes this type of teaching might indicate she does not feel comfortable with it, probably because of her unwillingness to lose control of her classes. It is also possible to assume that, because of the time constraints imposed by the school context (see 5.5.1), she often decides to ignore grammatical features which are not part of the syllabus.

#### 5.1.10 Practice: Nature and rationale

The grammar exercises the students complete in class and as homework are mostly taken from the textbook materials. In the classes observed, only two tasks came from a different source: a cued role-play and an oral drill, both created by the teacher herself. As regards the selection of exercises, Emma prioritises controlled practice with more predictable answers and leaves out those tasks which are time-consuming. She claims that the learners are not willing or able to work on free practice with open answers unless they are provided with a lot of guidance. She also states that controlled practice is easier to check and that the exercises she selects resemble those which are included in tests (**SR7, grammar practice**). As homework, the teacher also provides controlled practice, which is intended to compensate for the many classes the students miss during the semester (see 5.5.1) (**SR2, overall questions**). Her selection criteria might indicate some simplification of practice, which Emma justifies basically on the grounds of the learners' preferences and the type of training they need to do well in tests. Yet it is also possible to suggest that other factors influence her decision such as time constraints and her tendency to control the learning process.

As explained before, Emma makes use of traditional techniques which may help her fulfil her teaching goals. She designed a drilling task in which the students, guided by prompts, had to create pairs of sentences using PPC and PPS. First, they had to say the sentences aloud to their partners and then write them down. Emma argued that, in a secondary school context with time constraints, drilling aids her in exposing students to the language in a short period of time (**SR8, E2**). She added that oral drills offer them opportunities to speak in class, which allows learners to express themselves and to break the routine of doing written exercises (**ibid.**). She further justifies the use of oral drills

claiming that they help students to study some grammar point, to memorise it, to understand it, to internalise it, and to make it their own (**ibid.**). As regards the reasons for asking the learners to write down the sentences they had created in the oral drill, she explained that it was meant to encourage them to create their own reference materials in copybooks, which they can use later on to study for tests (**ibid.**). As a final task, the students had to write a pair of sentences using the two tenses under study but without the guidance of prompts. She then invited some of them to read their sentences aloud and provided feedback. It seems evident in this section as well that Emma's selection of exercises is highly influenced by time restrictions and the necessity to prepare learners for tests. There is also, however, an attempt of the teacher to provide something different which might boost the students' development of further skills.

#### 5.1.11 Integration of grammar into skills work

In the classes observed, grammar was integrated with speaking and writing, but never into reading or listening work. In connection with speaking, there was a focus on grammar in the role-play and the oral drill the teacher created (see 5.1.10). In both cases, the learners were guided by prompts which helped them to organise the elements of the sentences and questions syntactically. They were also assisted by the teacher in relation to the tenses they had to use. Regarding writing, Emma claims that "grammar always plays a key role in process writing" (**ibid.**), which could be observed in the classes where the students wrote their compositions. First, they were required to include certain grammar items in their writings, which were listed in the instructions to the task, as can be seen in the next passage from Emma's diary:

In the instruction stage I establish certain requirements for this writing. 'They will narrate a story and they will use mainly past tenses'

Past simple + used to/would

Past perfect

Past continuous (**TD, p. 1**)

The teacher also suggested some structures so that the learners could enrich their narratives. These suggestions were made to the whole class or to individual students when the teacher provided feedback on the two drafts they handed in



during the process (**DA**). The correction criteria naturally included a certain level of grammatical accuracy, as Emma explains in this extract:

At the correction stage I will see that the tenses, the syntax, the use of articles and adjectives (not in plural) is appropriate. I might conference with students to see why he/she used a certain structure, I might choose one grammar point that was repeatedly used wrongly and teach it to the whole class. [...] In the first correction I mark them with a symbol the students already have + know. In the second and last correction I give them the correct option (**TD, p. 1**)

In addition to these two instances of feedback, Emma often holds a discussion with the whole class when mistakes are recurrent and shared by the students (**SR6, E4; SR8, E5; TD**). Worth highlighting in this section is Emma's concern for fostering grammatical accuracy, which is manifest in the ongoing guidance she gives her students as to what language to use and in the permanent provision of feedback on mistakes, especially vis-à-vis tenses and syntax. This seems to be further evidence of her tendency to control the learning process, in this case, what the learners produce and learn. This section has also shown instances of task-driven grammar integration in Emma's classes (contextual perspective on integration). Grammar work typically precedes skills work, though it sometimes occurs while the learners are doing the task (e.g., her suggesting structures to enrich their narratives or her responding to students' questions) and after they have completed it (e.g., whole-class error correction) (Borg and Burns, 2008).

#### 5.1.12 Textbook materials

All EFL teachers at Cortázar School follow a textbook (**SI**), and Emma is no exception. Though she claims she does not like sticking to a coursebook for this does not allow her to be creative (**SR2, E1**), she seems to introduce changes only with regard to the development of writing and extensive reading. In practice, this means that every year she defines her own writing objectives and selects a short story to work with the students. When it comes to the teaching of grammar, vocabulary, intensive reading, listening, and speaking, Emma adheres to her textbook quite strictly, only modifying the number of tasks and sections they deal with. This close adherence has an effect on the learning process since it defines and restricts the nature of the input the learners are exposed to, including linguistic and cultural content, and the type of tasks they do.

In relation to grammar, Emma explains that the textbook she uses, *New Opportunities Intermediate* (Harris et al., 2006), has a strong grammar load, with three sections focusing on grammar in each unit (grammar focus, language problem solving, and review) and opportunities for recycling grammar items (**I1, p. 6; DA**). Along with the student's book, she also uses its *Language Powerbook* (Sharman et al., 2006), especially the grammar exercises. She adds that the book suggests explicit grammar teaching (**SR1, E2**), teaches and contextualises grammar basically at the sentence level (**I1, p. 7**), and favours the development of grammatical terminology (**SR3, E1**). Considering her teaching beliefs and style and the book-based character of her classes, it is not surprising to see all these aspects and a clear grammar focus reflected in Emma's grammar teaching practices.

#### 5.1.13 Tests

The quizzes and end-of-term tests the students complete are book-based and largely grammar-oriented. The grammar exercises are identical to the controlled practice provided by the textbook materials and done in class or as homework (**DA**). This way, Emma argues, teachers make sure that the learners are familiar with the tasks and are better prepared to complete them (**I2, p. 13**). This confirms the guided and controlled nature of grammar work in Emma's class and the teachers' intention of basing tests on 'tangible' language items the students can study.

#### 5.1.14 Summary

This section has revealed that Emma's classes, syllabus, tests, and teaching decisions, like those of other EFL teachers at Cortázar School (**SI**), are markedly grammar-based in nature. This does not appear to contradict Emma's personality, teaching style, beliefs, preferences, academic abilities, professional background, and PLLEs. Among the most salient features of her grammar teaching practices are: her tendency to control the teaching-learning process; her keen interest in providing brief and simple explanations and in making content and objectives explicit; her concern for 'weaker' learners and for providing them with 'tangible' language points to study; her readiness to let her professional experience shape her teaching actions; the textbook- and test-oriented selection of content, which is largely determined by time constraints and her confidence

with language awareness; the almost exclusive focus on discrete grammatical points which are taught at the sentence level; her inclination to simplify concepts, rules, and tasks; the academic, explicit, deductive, and teacher-centred character of her grammar presentations; the few instances of inductive and incidental grammar teaching; the selection of controlled practice, which is highly influenced by time restrictions and the need to prepare students for tests; her willingness to recycle old techniques; her close adherence to the textbook materials; and the selection and design of test exercises which are identical to those included in the textbook and which are, therefore, familiar to the learners. All these characteristics provide the basis for the exploration and better understanding of the experiential, cognitive, and contextual factors which will be discussed in the following sections. See Appendix 5 to read a summary table of Emma's engagement with grammar teaching from the macro-context (ELT department at Cortázar School) to the micro-context (her classroom).

## **5.2 PLLEs**

### **5.2.1 Private classes (age 6-10)**

Emma's first contact with English was at the age of six, when she took one-to-one private lessons with a teacher. These classes were entirely book-based (**I1, p. 2**) and consisted of memorising long lists of words which she learned by repeating term by term mechanically, without even knowing what she was saying (**I1, p. 3**). In addition, these classes were largely grammar-centred, which she enjoyed because she was able to understand the logic behind grammar from the very beginning. The grammar she studied was structural and involved the learning of discrete grammatical items such as nouns, adjectives, adverbs, articles, and verbs, which she then used to fill in gapped statements. She claims her strong points were conjugating verbs in different tenses and analysing syntax. She found it difficult to learn those grammatical structures which did not follow clear rules or which contained too many exceptions to the general norm. She argues she would like grammar to be more regular and compares learning grammatical rules with studying mathematical formulas (**I1, p. 4**). This coincides with her methodical and analytical personality, her preference for those language features which can be reasoned, and her dislike for the

uncertain. Finally, she thinks that learning English grammar has been very useful in many aspects, as she exemplifies in the following extract:

[Being good at grammar] was helpful, no doubt. [EFL] tests at secondary school were grammar-centred and you had to know how to use verb tenses; there were those exercises in which you were given a phrase and had to make up a suitable question for that phrase. This was the type of practice and I found it easy. [...] It surely helped me with Spanish grammar as well, [and] to understand language items that I now explain to my students, no doubt (*ibid.*; **my translation**)

These positive experiences have certainly contributed to the central role which grammar occupies in Emma's EFL classes nowadays. She adds: "in fact [grammar] is still the [teaching content] I like most because I first learned [English] this way and I was good at that" (*ibid.*).

After about four years of taking private lessons, Emma started to get disappointed with her classes since, even though she was a very good student, she felt she made no progress (**I1, p. 3; AA, p. 1**). Learning grammar alone did not help her to develop writing or speaking skills. Basically, she noticed she was unable to write more than isolated sentences or to keep a conversation for the reason that she found it very difficult to pronounce and to understand her interlocutors (**I1, p. 3**). This negative experience has undoubtedly had some impact on her current view of language learning. She states: "[by teaching grammar] I'm providing [learners] with structure, accuracy, whatever that I think they would need to become good students of the language, I don't know if necessarily good speakers of the language" (**I2, p. 10**). This view of the limited impact of grammar instruction is also reflected in the abovementioned belief that teaching grammar does not automatically turn students into competent L2 users, though it does give them, especially "weaker" learners, some "tangible" items to study and a "structured context to function" (*ibid.*). Similar PLLEs (metalinguistically rich but communicatively unrewarding) were reported by two teachers, Martha and Hanna (3 and 4 years of EFL teaching experience respectively), in Borg (1999a). However, unlike these much less experienced teachers, whose PLLEs apparently had a negative impact on their current teaching practices (their decision not to promote the use of grammatical terminology), Emma still has fond memories of her grammar-based PLLEs and

believes firmly in the benefits of grammar teaching (i.e. to help her learners, especially 'weaker' ones, to become good L2 students).

### 5.2.2 Secondary school (13-17)

EFL classes at secondary school followed a structural approach with grammar playing a central role in the syllabus (**I1, p. 8; AA, p. 1**). Grammar teaching was entirely deductive: rules were explained to the whole class, sometimes with the help of a reading text which included two or three examples of the grammar points under study, and then they were applied mechanically in exercises (**I1, p. 9; AA, p. 1**). Among the tasks the learners completed to internalise structures were gap-filling exercises, transformations, memorising lists of verbs and rules, and drillings (**AA, p. 1**). Emma indicates that, according to the principles of the structural approach, "having said the rule and done the exercises meant that the grammar content had been learnt" (**I1, p. 10; my translation**). This could be said to be fairly similar to the concept of 'accountability' introduced above in relation to her current explicit grammar teaching and through which she explains that, by discussing and practising grammar in class, she can ensure that the learners have understood and are able to apply grammar rules and, therefore, are better prepared for tests.

Emma has fond memories of the structural approach: "I was successful as regards grammar, because I was good at doing mechanical work, I was patient to repeat something that for other students was boring and tedious" (**AA, p. 1**). Like in her experience with private lessons, she remembers that she loved learning structures with logical and clear rules and that, as verb tenses became more complex, she sorted out problems using her mathematical logic. Sometimes this was not possible, as was the case of some items like mixed conditionals which did not comply with the rules she already knew or had too many exceptions to the norm, and which made her feel overwhelmed (**I1, p. 10**). She was naturally good at tests, which were all written and grammar-based, involving such tasks as writing the correct verb tense in gapped sentences or writing questions to answers. However, as was the case of her private lessons, there were no opportunities to speak or write and there was the idea that, by learning and practising grammar, speaking and writing would emerge automatically: "The [grammar method] implied learning lists of verbs and rules, transforming and filling out with the correct form of words and in so doing, hopefully we would learn to speak and write spontaneously" (**AA, p. 1**). What is more, classes were taught

mostly in the students' L1 (**I1, p. 9**), which meant there was no room for interacting with the teacher or other classmates in L2. By the end of her secondary school, Emma was still unable to speak or write fluently, which naturally frustrated her and reinforced her idea that grammar instruction made no significant contribution to helping students to become good L2 users.

As regards her secondary school teachers, Emma recalls one in particular and two aspects of her personality and methodology which she claims had an impact on her own teaching beliefs. First, this teacher was not very nice and rewarded only those students who, like her, did well in class and in tests. Emma remembers she felt upset when this teacher scolded “weak” students or did not treat them well (**I1, p. 10**). Second, she values the fact that this teacher's grammar teaching supported those learners who found it very difficult to learn L2 since it allowed them to understand some aspects of the language and eventually to pass their tests (**ibid.**). This experience might help explain Emma's deep concern for “weak” students in her class nowadays. As will be seen in 5.4, many of her teaching strategies are intended to assist these learners, such as her tendency to oversimplify grammar content and rules and to overuse repetition. However, whereas for her secondary school teacher grammar was simply the content that had to be taught, for Emma grammar is a strategy she deliberately uses to assist “weak” students. Emma claims that studying grammar is particularly useful not to “weak” learners in general but to those who feel upset when they are not able to understand L2. Grammar thus makes them feel confident and satisfied, and helps them experience a sense of achievement (**I1, p. 11**). Emma compares this with her own experience learning music:

I think that I have a similar experience learning music. I remember that, for me, music was an unintelligible language. I was not able to understand what I was taught in music lessons; I was not able to grasp what those symbols meant. I made every possible effort but I couldn't, so, with the help of my classmates, I managed to pass the different levels. If I had been given something more tangible to study, I would've been able to learn music by myself. Though I understand that there are things which can't be intellectualised, I think that in the case of music I would've been able to learn it if I had been helped to intellectualise it a bit more (**ibid.; my translation**).

Many of Emma's current grammar-related approaches, techniques, and concerns appear to be associated with her PLLEs and, as seen in the extract

above, with other schooling experiences: “When you look back at how you learnt maybe you can find some kind of parallelism with your present beliefs and practices. That happens because you believe that what worked for you under the circumstances in which you learned will be true for other learners” (AA, p. 1). Like the experienced teachers in Hayes (2009a), Pahissa and Tragant (2009), and Zeng and Murphy (2007), Emma seems to be fully aware of the transfers she makes from her PLLEs.

### 5.2.3 Teacher training course at university

Emma’s language learning experiences during the TTC also appear to have shaped her current teaching beliefs and practices. She has memories of all types of tutors: good, bad, committed, vague, and those who made their subject more “accountable” and, therefore, were easy to follow. Though she acknowledges she learned from them all, she felt comfortable mainly with the latter kind of tutor for the reason that, as a methodical person herself, she preferred subjects with clear objectives and where the teacher always kept a certain order (I1, p. 12). At the TTC she took four English Language classes (Language I, II, III, and IV). Emma states that these classes were vague and that the higher the level, the more complex and less clear they became. In Language III and IV, for instance, it was not clear whether language classes were about literature, grammar, or language awareness in general (I1, p. 13). She thinks that, because of her own language learning experiences at university, in her classes she always makes content and objectives explicit (*ibid.*). This is closely related to her dislike for ambiguity or the lack of clear objectives explained above, which can frustrate students when they fail exams because they do not know what aspects they will be tested on.

Emma also took three or four Grammar classes at the TTC. The focus was on structural grammar, mostly on the analysis of syntactical structures and the learning of discrete grammar items such as word categories (e.g., nouns, verbs, and articles) and verb tenses (I1, pp. 17-18). She claims that the repetitive syntax analysis she was exposed to helped her to improve her understanding of more complex grammar content and her production of longer and more sophisticated pieces of written discourse (I1, p. 15).

With respect to Methodology classes at the TTC, she states she has few memories of the contents included. She remembers some golden rules she was given: “the textbook guides your teaching”, “don’t give long explanations”, “make

sure the students use what you have taught them”, and “don’t use Spanish in class” (I1, p. 18; my translation). The first three maxims were also present in her PLLEs, so it seems not surprising that she replicated them in her own teaching practices. However, this was not the case of the fourth maxim since her private and secondary school classes were taught mostly in the students’ L1 and, in her current classes, she frequently uses Spanish to provide explanations, to check understanding, and to provide feedback (see 5.4.2 B). This means that, in relation to the use of L1, she repeats the model she was exposed to in her PLLEs and disregards what she was taught at the TTC. Finally, she argues that she never received instruction on how to teach grammar, either in the grammar classes or in the methodology subjects she took (*ibid.*). This testifies to Nilsson’s claim that, in TTCs, “different knowledge bases such as subject matter and pedagogy are often taught separately, thus inadvertently creating a situation in which student-teachers need to find ways, by themselves, of transforming their various ‘knowledges’ to useable and meaningful forms within the context of teaching” (2008: 1282). Johnston and Goettsch also criticise the modularisation of the teacher knowledge base in TTCs and stress “the need for a significantly more integrated approach to the language teacher curriculum” (2000: 463).

While she was at the TTC, Emma took English and Portuguese classes at the university laboratory. There she was exposed to behaviourism, which was in fashion at the time and which was also promoted in her methodology lessons at the TTC (I1, p. 15). Some of the techniques used in this teaching approach helped Emma to achieve oral fluency:

I developed oral fluency by learning set phrases through the behaviourist approach used at the lab where one repeated, in a very short period of time, very short, or where one had to produce a correct response and then one obtained a reward, which was the correct answer offered by the recording and then the possibility to do it again if one worked overtime at the lab (*ibid.*; my translation)

Emma’s PLLEs had not offered her any opportunities for developing her speaking skills, nor did her classes at the TTC since these were all lectures with little or no participation on the part of the students (I1, p. 12). She found the oral drillings and repetition used in behaviourism very effective for they allowed her to speak and, eventually, to acquire some oral skills (I1, p. 14). This success might be the



reason which motivates Emma to replicate, in her current practices, some of the behaviourist techniques she found effective as a student.

#### 5.2.4 Post teacher training course

Emma claims that teacher training does not finish when the TTC ends but starts at that moment (**I1, p. 12**). After university, she took teacher development classes at the British Council in Spain, which represents her first memories of a focus on communication (**I1, p. 9**). With the emergence of communicative approaches, the role of grammar teaching was redefined and, in most L2 learning settings, grammar was minimised and sometimes neglected. Her tutors at the British Council, for instance, suggested that grammar explanations should be kept short (**I1, p. 5**). Emma understood this new tendency and started to act accordingly. As she gained more experience, Emma realised that her students needed some grammar focus in their lessons to know why they said what they said and to take more informed decisions on what language to use in different situations (**ibid.**). Emma claims that it was after the TTC when she learned more about grammar:

... where I learn more about grammar is when I start taking teacher development courses after the [TTC] and I see that there are other types of grammar. So it was there that I start to widen my grammar, which was so structured, into a more communicative one, and I understand that there are other ways of designing a syllabus (**I1, p. 17; my translation**)

Nowadays, though Emma tends to use a traditional teacher-centred approach to grammar instruction, grammar learning is sometimes integrated in her class along with other foci, such as skills development, to serve a communicative purpose (e.g., writing a narrative or communicating with the teacher or peers in class).

#### 5.2.5 Summary

There is ample evidence in Emma's classes of the relationship between her PLLEs and her current grammar teaching practices. Some of the aspects which might be derived from these experiences are: the book-based and grammar-oriented nature of her classes; her exclusively teacher-fronted grammar presentations; her deductive grammar instruction; her selection of controlled

practice to be done in class, as homework, and in tests; her focus on discrete grammar items at the sentence level; her dislike for ambiguity and the need to make content and objectives explicit; the use of recycled teaching techniques from traditional methods; her view of the role of grammar in developing language learning; her concept of “accountability”; and her use of the students’ L1. In the SR sessions, she mentioned that very often she resorts to explanations, learning strategies, or teaching techniques which were effective for her as a student (**SR1, E11; SR7, E1; SR8, E2**). Her golden rule in filtering her PLLEs would be to replicate what was effective and to refrain from what did not produce good results, as she explains in the following extract:

I think that one’s experience is nourished by everything that one has lived through: what worked, which one will repeat, and what did not work, which one will avoid. The methods I learnt and applied worked for a while, and then came other beliefs. However, from time to time I see myself using and enjoying an aspect of that methodology because, after all, I saw it work (**AA, p. 2**)

See Appendix 6 to read a summary table of Emma’s PLLEs and the impact these may have had on her current teaching practices.

### 5.3 KAG

#### 5.3.1 Manifestations of KAG

Despite a few fuzzy areas and some evidence of lack of confidence in her KAG, most of the grammar teaching episodes in Emma’s classes and the subsequent SR sessions reveal visible manifestations of her KAG. These are evident, for example, in her adequate explanations, appropriate use of grammar content in examples, and her accurate corrections of students’ mistakes.

##### A. Explicit KAG

Except for the few peculiarities in her KAG and the instances of implicit KAG which will be described in subsequent sections, the majority of the manifestations of Emma’s KAG relate to her explicit knowledge of English grammar. Evidence of this was found in her explanation, exemplification, and/or definition of the following grammatical items, most of which comprise verb patterns (non-finite forms, modals, state/action verbs, tenses, and verb phrases):

worth + V-ing, 'should' in the perfective form, the distinction between 'expressions of time' and 'linking words', the use of 'linking words', the difference between 'at last' and 'in the end', 'used to' and 'would', 'would' when expressing 'past habit' or 'condition', 'state' and 'action' verbs, the distinction between 'go on' and 'go by', nouns and verbs, PPC versus PPS (despite the inadequacies which will be outlined subsequently), PPC, PPS, and 'decide' + to infinitive and 'arrive' + preposition 'at'.

Additionally, Emma's explicit KAG is manifest in her response to the GJT. 54.5% of the explanations she provided were correct. She was able to correct and explain the mistakes of the following grammatical points: *to* infinitive verb in the verb pattern 'seem to + verb' (2 cases); past simple tense to describe concurrent events in past simple (6); past simple tense and past continuous tense in active voice (1); verb collocation 'look out' + 'at' (1); past participial clause (1); past perfect tense (1); 'for' to introduce a prepositional phrase expressing period of time (2); verb 'to be' in past simple tense, third person singular to show subject-verb agreement (1); past perfect tense used in reported speech (1); the use of the determiner 'another' (1); adverb of manner (1); genitive case (2); adjective in coordination with other adjectives (1); *to* infinitive verb in the verb pattern 'beg someone to + verb' (2); double subject (1); singular noun (1); double object (1); double negative (1); *to* infinitive verb to express purpose (1); adjective + 'at' (collocation) (1); and the coordinating conjunction 'and' (1). Worth highlighting is the fact that there exists a marked difference between Emma's performance in 'error correction' (75%) and that in 'error explanation' (54.5%). This echoes the findings in Andrews (1999a) and Andrews and McNeill (2005), though the gap between the teachers' performances reported on in these two studies appears to be considerably wider (see 3.3.3).

## **B. Implicit KAG**

In the classes observed and the SR sessions, there are two manifest cases of implicit KAG. The first instance involves the use of present simple and past simple tenses. In the following extract, the teacher is going over the different prompts in a role-play and is eliciting from the students examples of the type of questions and answers they have to make:

**St:** What do you think of it? What *did* you think?

**T:** OK. You can refer to the present, yeah, you can use the present if you talk about the Argentinian team: what do you think about the Argentinian team? But not about the game. Game, team? What's the difference? Team?

**St:** El equipo

**T:** El equipo. What do you, what do you think about the team? Yeah? OK; good. What *do* you think about the Brazilian team? Good; bad. But the game, past: what *did* you think about the game? Because the game is over. Good? Good (**SR1, E2**).

Unlike her typical classroom behaviour, Emma decided not to make the rules for the use of present simple and past simple tenses explicit to the learners. In the SR session, she explained that she had provided a quick version of the rules because grammar was not the focus of the task and because the learners already knew the rules. I then asked her to provide details of such rules. First, she ignored the question and, instead, explained why the students tended to use present simple instead of past simple. When asked again, she hesitated and gave an unintelligible answer, saying that such use of present simple involved aspects of the team now and in the past. She then said she did not remember the exact name of the use of present simple under analysis. Though Emma seems to know what language should be used since her suggestions in the extract are appropriate, she appears to be unable to verbalise the rules involving the uses of present simple and past simple in these circumstances. Her knowledge of these uses seems to be, therefore, implicit.

Another manifestation of implicit KAG takes place when a learner asks Emma whether it is possible to say "He has been being aggressive all his life". First, the teacher recognised the statement as inaccurate at once but, unlike her typical behaviour, she did not provide an immediate explanation of why the sentence was wrong. Instead, she bounced the question back to the student, which she then claimed was a strategy she used to give herself some time to think (**SR8, E5**). Second, she gave two reasons to explain the ungrammaticality of the sentence: "the verb cannot be used in this tense" and "it's redundant to use [...] two forms of the same verb [together]" (**ibid.**). The first reason formulated the rule but did not explain it, whereas the second one sounded speculative and hardly offered a clear explanation of the subject. Finally, as will be discussed in 5.3.2 A, she acknowledged, both in class and then in the SR session, that she was not sure about the rule for this grammatical item: "Or it doesn't sound good. I

don't know if you cannot, but it doesn't sound, doesn't sound good" (comment made in class, *ibid.*) and "I didn't want to commit myself to saying 'they *cannot* go together because it's a grammar rule'" (comment made during SR, *ibid.*). In short, she was aware of the ungrammaticality of the sentence but was unable to explain its rule, which might indicate she has implicit knowledge of the grammatical item. This event (Emma providing feedback on the grammatical accuracy of "He has been being aggressive all his life") will be further discussed in subsequent sections, which shows that a single episode can be associated with different aspects of teacher knowledge (see 5.3.2 A, 5.3.3 B, and 5.4.2 B).

With respect to the GJT, it is not possible to assert confidently that there exist manifestations of implicit knowledge. First, it could be argued that in the 24 cases where Emma identified and corrected a mistake but provided no or incomplete explanations (43.6% of the cases) there is some evidence of implicit knowledge of the grammatical item concerned. However, this is not necessarily true. Considering that the majority of her explanations in the GJT tend to be brief, it must be the case that Emma's incomplete answers are the result of her inclination to be concise and not of lack of explicit knowledge of the items. There is also the possibility that the nature of her explanations may be shaped by other factors than simply her knowledge of the grammar such as tiredness, anxiety, time constraints, and distracting contextual elements. In other words, her application of KAG may have been influenced by attitudinal, situational, or contextual factors (see Andrews, 2007: 41, 46). Second, on one occasion Emma provided an accurate explanation of her correction but included question marks at the end of it. In the sentence "She was the only one who she had the power ...", she deleted the pronoun 'she' and explained: "double subject??". This could arguably reveal she has implicit knowledge of the grammatical point, though it could also indicate lack of confidence in her KAG or uncertainty with respect to the terminology used in her explanation. In conclusion, in view of the fact that all the evidence of implicit KAG in the GJT is refutable, a follow up interview with the teacher after the correction would have been needed to support such evidence.

### 5.3.2 Fuzzy areas in Emma's KAG

#### A. Observations and stimulated recall sessions

A few peculiarities in Emma's KAG were observed in her classes and the SR sessions. One of the instances has to do with the uses of PPC, as can be seen in the following extract in which the students were asked to identify the correct statement out of two options:

**T:** 'Peter has just swum' or 'Peter's just been swimming'? What is correct?

**Sts:** 'Peter's just been swimming'.

**T:** Good. Why?

**St1:** Because ... is duration.

**T:** Yes, because the activity or the action has certain duration (**SR8, E6**)

In class, the teacher accepted the student's suggestion and thus conveyed the wrong idea that the use of PPC in this case was to express the notion of 'duration'. Then, during the SR session, she held the same opinion, though, after giving it some thought, she realised her position might be wrong, mainly because of the use of 'just' in the sentence. After observing her classes on PPC and by giving a look at the textbook, it would be possible to explain Emma's confusion. The coursebook explicitly introduces two uses of PPC: "an activity that may not be finished" and "an activity continuing or repeated over a period of time" (or 'to express duration', as the teacher explained it) (p. 37). There is a third use, 'to talk about an action that started in the past and stopped recently', which is included in the practice section of the book but not presented formally and which was not made explicit to the learners in class. First, it might be the case that Emma did not realise about this third use in the materials and fixed in her mind only the two uses contained in the book's presentation, from which she chose one to explain the use of PPC in 'Peter's just been swimming'. Second, either because of her tendency to simplify grammar content or because it was the use which better allowed her to differentiate PPC from PPS, in her own presentation and in the explanations provided throughout the unit, Emma highlighted only the notion of 'duration'. Therefore, it might be likely that, at the moment of providing some reason to the students and at the beginning of the SR session, she could only think of this use of PPC. In either case, Emma's acceptance of a mistaken notion in class and her subsequent confusion in the SR interview might have been

caused by her inclination to provide learners with a simplified version of concepts and rules.

In the same class and also in relation to the uses of PPC and PPS, Emma provided instructions and an explanation which were not accurate. Based on five sets of prompts, the students were asked to create pairs of sentences using PPC in the first one and PPS in the other one. She explained to them that in this exercise, PPC was used to express 'duration' and PPS to talk about 'accomplishment'. A problem arose in connection with the fifth set ("He / be / aggressive / all his life. He /sent / two men to hospital"), in which a combination of PPC and PPS was not possible and in which 'duration' was not expressed by PPC but by PPS. Confused, the learners raised the question to the teacher:

**St1:** Teacher [unintelligible]. He has been being aggressive?

**T:** No, and why not? No, and why not? Good, good question! [after 17 seconds] Erm ... One reason could be .. this verb cannot be used in this tense. That could be ... a very simple reason. The other could be that it's redundant to use the two verbs ... two forms of the same verb. Has been being, being. Both are the correct reasons.

**St2:** Teacher, por que es 'has been' y no 'has been being'?

**T:** 'Has been being'. That's what we are saying. Can I have your attention please? Last sentence there you have the verb to be. And you said it correctly 'he has been aggressive all his time, all his life. He has sent two men to pris/ to hospital'. We didn't use present perfect progressive in this half. We used present perfect simple. Because of two reasons, and [name of student] is going to tell you the two reasons. One is ...

**St1:** The first reason is because you cannot use two forms of the same verb near, two verbs together.

**T:** Or it doesn't sound good. I don't know if you cannot, but it doesn't sound, doesn't sound good.

**St1:** And the other reason I have forgotten.

**T:** That the verb, simple, verb to be ...

**St1:** Ah, is not permitted for this tense.

**T:** OK. For you to remember. Try to keep that as an explanation. Spanish has something like that. Er ...

**St2:** He estado siendo.

**T:** He estado siendo, he estado estando. He estado. He estado comprando, si, pero he estado estando, no. He estado aquí durante dos horas. Pero he estado estando? No. So something similar to that. Redundancy ... OK. **(SR8, E5)**

Some comments are worth making here. First, Emma did not notice this problem until one of the students raised the issue. Considering that she understood the learner's question immediately, the misleading instructions and prompts might have been a simple distraction on her part when writing the exercise. Second, the rule she presented about 'duration' being exclusively expressed by PPC is not true as this notion can also be conveyed by PPS (e.g., "He's been aggressive all his life", "He's taught English for 20 years"). The textbook, however, introduces this use only in relation to PPC. An uncritical and limited reading of the information provided by the materials, along with her propensity to simplify concepts and rules, might have led the teacher to assume, and then to explain to the learners, that 'duration' is the exclusive use of PPC. In other words, the input the students received from the textbook and from the teacher reached them in 'unfiltered' form (see Andrews, 1999b, 2001, 2007). Finally, her explanation was not altogether convincing, mainly because of her hesitation when she said: "I don't know if you cannot [use two forms of the same verb near], but it doesn't sound, doesn't sound good". This might be evidence of some lack of confidence when dealing with impromptu grammar work and in relation to complex grammatical items. This aspect will be further explored in 5.3.3 B and 5.4.2 B.

Still another peculiarity in connection with the distinction between PPC and PPS was observed in class 7 when the teacher was checking the students' answers to an exercise in which they had filled in some gaps in an interview using the verbs provided in brackets either in PPC or PPS:

**St:** Yes, actually, I have been living in the Australian outback for the last few months and I have made a lot of friends among the Abo ...

**T:** Aborigines.

**St:** Aborigines. They are very friendly people and they have helping me a lot.

**T:** They have ...

**St:** Been

**T:** They have been helping me a lot ... OK. Or they have helped me a lot, OK. In this case, for example both ... it depends on what you want to express in this case. (**SR7, E4**)

The passage shows how Emma first accepted the student's answer, then suggested another possibility, and, finally, recognised both options as correct, though the learner's response appeared to be inaccurate in the context in which it



was used. In the SR session, in her attempt to justify her acceptance of the learner's answer, Emma provided a confusing explanation: "Besides, the context here doesn't really ... talk about 'accomplishment' of very friendly people who have helped me a lot when I had a problem. Instead, they have helped a lot and now ... I don't know, I'm in another country. Maybe the idea of helping me for a long time is there. Is that what I'm saying?" (*ibid.*). These two extracts reveal some uncertainties in her KAG. First, Emma accepted an inaccurate answer as correct. This is perfectly feasible in the context of a class since the teacher is often constrained by limiting factors such as time restrictions. That is, this could well be the case of CFs influencing the application of Emma's KAG (see Andrews, 2007: 41-46). However, when given time to reflect upon the accuracy of the answers in the interview, Emma still thought the student's option was correct. This might arguably reflect some deviation in her knowledge of the distinction between PPC and PPS. This idea could be further proved when she questioned her own answer, which was the correct one, making reference to the notion of 'accomplishment' as if it were the only use which PPS could express. Finally, her attempt to justify the learner's answer resulted in a confusing explanation, which the teacher herself recognised as such when she asked: "Is that what I'm saying?" (*ibid.*).

A further peculiarity in Emma's KAG was manifested in class 4 during impromptu grammar work on two different uses of 'would'. Two classes before, Emma had introduced 'would' to convey the notion of 'past habit' and, when asked by the students, she had successfully explained the difference between this type of 'would' and that used in second conditionals. In class 4, during a discussion on a reading passage, there emerged the need on the part of the learners to use 'would' to express 'future in the past', as can be seen in Episode 1 below. Then, she incidentally dealt with this use and that of second conditional sentences, as is shown in the second passage, Episode 2.

### **Episode 1**

**T:** No, that's not the correct answer to why he was so worried about missing a bus.

**St1:** Maybe to go to/ have to ... como se dice? [how do we say it?] ... because the other bus go the next week.

**T:** OK, perfect but in the past.

**St1:** The other bus went the, the next week.

**T:** Because the next bus ... Podemos usar en vez de 'went the next week', podemos usar un futuro en el pasado? [Can we use instead of '...', can we use a type of future in the past?] The next bus ...

**St2:** ... will go

**T:** 'Will' future now. [Sts: unintelligible] 'Would', no? The next bus would go, er... leave, the following week. That is the correct answer. **(SR4, E1; my translation)**

## Episode 2

**T:** Yeah, he wanted to see the northern light but why did he lie?

**Sts:** [Unintelligible] If he says the true ...

**T:** Because if it was true ...

**St:** they didn't make him pass.

**T:** They ... Ese futuro que dije hoy? [That future I told you about today?] Futuro en el pasado [Future in the past] If, if it is/was, sorry, if it was true ...

**St:** he wouldn't go

**T:** he would go [unintelligible] lo dejarían pasar [they would let him pass].

**St:** they wouldn't let him pass.

**T:** let him pass. OK. OK. **(SR4, E2; my translation)**

In Episode 2, Emma appeared to think that, in both cases, 'would' was used to talk about 'future in the past'. In the SR session, her confusion persisted. She claimed that both extracts made reference to the same use of 'would' but, this time, she thought they showed examples of 'would' to express condition. In her attempt to explain her point, she simply transformed the idea in the first extract into a conditional sentence: "if he didn't take this bus, [...] he would have to wait for another week" **(SR4, E1-2)**, thus changing the original use intended in the passage. This confusion might reveal some deviation in her knowledge of 'would' to express 'future in the past'. Further evidence of this can be found in the following extract from the SR on class 2, where Emma was asked by the researcher to think of other uses of 'would' apart from the ones she had discussed with the students:

**T:** The only one that comes to my mind but I'm not familiar with, I mean, I don't know if I use it, is 'would' as a past of 'will' in something where there is some will in the past [...] 'Will you do it for me? She said she would.' Meaning more than the conditional, or not exactly the conditional, but there was some will in, in what she could do. **(SR2, E10)**

### B. Grammaticality judgement task

Some fuzzy areas in Emma's KAG may also be found in her response to the GJT. Evidence of this might be: the mistakes not identified, the mistakes identified but not corrected, the unnecessary corrections, the wrong corrections, and the wrong explanation provided.

As regards the mistakes Emma did not identify in the two compositions, these are related to the following grammatical categories: plural nouns (3 cases), zero article (2), a complementizer introducing a nominal relative clause ('whatever') (2), past simple tense (past simple vs. past continuous) (1), adverbial particle (1), to infinitive verb ('to have the necessity *to do* something') (1), preposition (1), the degree complement structure 'as + adjective + as (+ clause)' (1), a degree adverb modifying another adverb ('very' vs. 'too') (1), and a clause acting as coordinating conjunct (1). With reference to the mistakes which Emma identified but did not correct, one has to do with the past simple tense and the other with fragmentation ('All that a little bit of my uncle personality').

Peculiarities in Emma's KAG are also manifest in her corrections and explanations. First, she made three corrections where there were no mistakes: she replaced the present participle verb 'remembering' in a present participial clause with the finite verb 'remembered', substituted the preposition 'between' for the preposition 'in', and added an article ('a/the') where there should be zero article (see Appendix 3). Second, she made corrections which either made the statement ungrammatical or changed its meaning: deleted the preposition 'with' in 'contrasted with'; wrote 'likes' (present simple, third person singular) instead of 'like' (present simple, third person plural) for the subject 'all of them'; replaced 'influenced by his behaviour' with 'influenced my behaviour' in the sentence 'my uncle is the only person who influenced by his behaviour', thus changing the meaning of the statement; and placed a comma in 'He did not say any word [,] hurt the feeling of anybody', hereby making the statement ('he did not say any word') nonsensical (see full text in Appendix 2). Finally, in one of her corrections she explained that 'was supposed' in 'April was supposed to stop' is an instance of passive voice, when in fact it forms part of the semi-modal (or quasi-modal) 'be supposed to', which is used to express obligation or necessity.

These peculiarities in the teacher's KAG do not necessarily indicate that she has limitations in her knowledge of these grammatical points. They do reveal, however, some shortcomings in the teacher's behaviour which might be caused

by one or a combination of multiple factors such as the huge number of mistakes in the passages (this is particularly the case of the second composition), the ambiguities in the meaning intended by the writer, the teacher's personal circumstances like time constraints and tiredness, the pressure placed by the test itself, and, naturally, some deviation in her KAG.

### 5.3.3 Confidence in KAG

#### A. Manifestations of confidence in KAG

Andrews (1999b) argues that the quality of the input the teacher filters for learners is influenced by such factors as the extent of his/her explicit KAL and his/her confidence in it. In Emma's case, manifestations of confidence in her KAG, which she states she feels when teaching at an intermediate level at secondary school (**SR2, overall questions**), seem to be evident in her readiness to filter the grammatical input the learners receive from the textbook and from other students. This predisposition also reflects, as pointed out in 5.1.3, her "awareness of [her] key role in mediating input for learning" (Andrews and McNeill, 2005: 174).

As regards filtering input from the materials, she argues that she is ready to challenge the book if necessary (**SR7, E4**) and to be critical of the treatment given to the content in the textbook in relation to her own teaching objectives (**TD; SR1, E1**). Though in general she trusts the information and examples provided in textbooks from well-known authors and publishers, she claims she has spotted mistakes more than once (**SR3, E1**) and recalls the following instance: "I remember that this happened with [...] the teaching of present continuous. The explanation was for an activity that is going on now. And the example is 'this afternoon he's going shopping'. So at that moment I had to explain, very briefly because they were smaller kids and the level was lower, that that use was not exactly an action that was happening at the moment" (**SR8, E6**). She also adds that the rules textbooks include sometimes are inaccurate or incomplete and remembers the following case: "once I read that you cannot even use present perfect to say 'a person has died', which I've heard. But I remember reading a grammatical explanation saying that the only tense to refer to that action would be past simple" (**SR8, E7**). When she identifies inadequacies in the materials, she deals with them only if they are too evident and confusing;

otherwise, she overlooks them (**SR8, E6**). There are occasions on which the input is accurate but too complex for the students. In such cases, she filters the information using these techniques: “Sometimes I provide a different context from the one there; sometimes I expand the context; sometimes I add another strategy, for example, I don’t know, the use of the past perfect for narrative purposes: well, I produce extra practice, writing practice, writing a short story or a story. What else? More explanation. That’s what I do” (**SR1, E1**). It is worth highlighting, though, that in the classes observed there were no instances in which Emma filtered the grammatical input the learners received from the materials, even when this would have been appropriate (see 5.3.2 A). She once wrote in her diary: “I don’t really like the next grammar point as it is planned in the textbook. I think this verb tense – Present Perfect Progressive – does not match the discourse expectations I have of the unit = narration of an accident while travelling” (**TD**). Despite this, she made no changes to the materials or in class to adapt grammar items to her teaching needs.

With reference to filtering input from other learners, this took place when Emma corrected the students’ oral mistakes and when she made comments on their contributions, for example, while eliciting information from them. Both her corrections and comments were accurate, and she looked confident most of the times. Regarding her correcting oral inaccuracies, it could be seen, however, that there were occasions when she made corrections and some others when she overlooked the mistakes. When asked to explain the rationale for this, she explained that, in general, she makes corrections when “the mistake sounds too shocking or too different [from the correct version]” (**SR1, E4-7**) and depending on who is being corrected, as is shown in the following two extracts:

#### **Extract 1**

For example in the case of [name of student] [...] when she said: ‘well, I didn’t see the match either’. For example that use of ‘either’. I know that she’s such a good student, I don’t care if she said [in the same answer]: ‘I hear it’. In that case I would say that yes, again, I would overlook one example, one mistake if the student contributes with some very good language on the other hand. [...] In the case of weak students ... for example, [name of student] has a tendency to use ‘have’ for all the people and all the time. ‘Have’ is the only verb. In fact, he uses, he overuses ‘have’ instead of other verbs. In that case I didn’t want to interrupt that dialogue. I think that later on I, probably not in this case, [...] I would’ve said ‘OK, [name of student], why don’t you

say it again this time and you correct all the 'haves' and try to say or has or had or another word'. So maybe, maybe something has to do with the type of student [...]. Too good or very good, a student that is very good, OK, never mind if she made a mistake, leave it like that. Probably too weak or too hesitant like [name of student] when he said 'I have, I had to listen in the radio but we *can* listen all the match', because I know that he's too shy, so in that case I ... I know ... personalities (SR1, E4-7)

#### **Extract 2**

Again, again, in this case I know that the student who produced this mistake was very good because to produce 'must've seen it' she was good, she was using a modal in the perfective tense or form. She deserves an explanation and a correction, because this girl is at the point of improving her language. [...] I think that she deserves MY explanation. I cannot overlook that girl because she's going to understand it. Maybe I wouldn't explain that to one of the boys that made mistakes before (SR1, E8)

These extracts reveal that the teacher's decision of whether to correct or overlook a mistake does not relate only to her confidence in her KAG but depends on other aspects such as the learners' language level, their personality, their capacity to understand her explanations, and their possibilities to advance their knowledge of English. All in all, her willingness to filter the input learners received from other learners and the quality of the eventual 'filtered' input might be evidence not only of Emma's explicit knowledge of the grammatical features involved but also of her confidence in such knowledge.

### **B. Manifestations of lack of confidence in KAG**

Notwithstanding Emma's claim of confidence in her KAG when teaching at an intermediate level at secondary school and the evidence described above, there were several manifestations of lack of confidence in her KAG in the classes observed and the SR sessions. Her lack of confidence is reflected basically in her frequent use of what Biber et al. call "epistemic stance adverbials of doubt" like 'probably', 'most probably', and 'maybe' (1999: 854), and of other hedging expressions such as '90 per cent', 'usually', and 'sometimes' when providing rules and explanations either in class or during the interviews. The following extracts show two occasions in her class when she displayed this behaviour:

**Extract 1**

T: [...] What else did you use to do as a kid?

St: Watch television [unintelligible].

T: But you don't watch it now? Because that's the point: if you use 'used to' it means that ***practically*** now you don't do it any longer (**SR2 E6; emphasis added**)

**Extract 2**

T: So, I understood the lesson: 'used to' you used it when you want to refer to a past habit that you had, ***probably*** with the idea of some time ago, and ***probably*** with the idea that you don't do it any longer. That habit has stopped somehow (**ibid., emphasis added**)

Emma employs the adverbials 'practically' and 'probably' when explaining the use of 'used to'. When asked to comment on the statements in these extracts, she said:

I don't know if they are true. I mean, what happens is that sometimes when you give a rule ... er, well, you remember the rule as a teacher because you have studied it, because the text says it, and ... you play safe because you're not a native speaker, probably you play safe by repeating a rule. Sometimes, and it *has* happened to me, you say a rule and, somehow, someone says an expression and you have to agree that it was right, and that expression was *the* exception to the rule, or ... it was breaking the rule altogether. Imagine, we teach English with British books ... the present perfect has a lot of consideration in these textbooks and suddenly you listen to a song that is an American song and where the present perfect is not used as in Great Britain, so everything is in the past tense. All the rules that you said, something that happens lately, something that is connected to the present, suddenly ... false, I don't know, you cannot hold on to that rule in front of the students. And what you want to do is to help them. So what I do is I protect [T laughs] myself by saying well 'probably', 'most probably', in case, in case you can use 'used to' for one meaning that includes the present too, which I don't think so, I don't think *now*. But I have that, that strategy (**ibid.**)

This passage confirms that Emma's use of 'epistemic stance adverbials of doubt' is derived from her lack of confidence in her KAG. First, she openly declares she is not sure if the rule she is giving the learners is true and justifies her uncertainty making reference to the existence of exceptions to rules and recalling some professional experiences. In another SR session she stated that she used to feel

more confident with her knowledge of rules but became less sure as she proved herself wrong on many occasions: “I used to be probably more straightforward to saying ‘no, they cannot go together, it doesn’t sound good, don’t say it’ until [...] I was surprised. I was surprised many times in my academic life with expressions that I said they couldn’t go together, that was wrong, and then I read it and it was OK and it was used and apparently was formally good” (SR8, E5). This might reveal Emma’s belief that feeling confident with one’s KAG is determined by one’s knowledge of rules and *all* their exceptions, and by the ability to provide learners with categorical explanations. Second, further evidence of her lack of confidence can be found in her acknowledgement that she plays safe by repeating a rule, which, as a NNS of the language, she has studied from a textbook. This might in part explain the book-based nature of her classes and the fact that, though she claims she is critical of and sometimes filters the book contents, in the ten classes observed there were no instances of her filtering the grammatical input learners received from the textbook (see previous section). Finally, Emma adds that using these adverbials is a strategy she employs to protect herself, which she confirms in another SR interview when she discusses her use of ‘usually’ in her explanation of the plural noun ‘travels’ (SR3, E2). A similar case is reported on in Borg (2001). Eric, an experienced teacher with an overall confidence in his KAG (like Emma), used hedging qualifiers such as ‘usually’ and ‘90 per cent’ to cover himself when he felt uncertain about some grammar items.

A further indication of lack of confidence in her KAG takes place when Emma attempts to explain the ungrammaticality of ‘he’s been being aggressive’ (see class extract in 5.3.2 A). When she heard the student’s question, her first reaction was to bounce it back to the learner. In the SR session she said: “I was surprised and I sent the question to see if they realised *while*, and that would be my strategy, my secret, while I thought about a clear, simple answer ... while I gathered my ideas to give the explanation” (SR8, E5). Though the reason for bouncing the question back to the individual student may well have been intended to promote class discussion, as was the typical reaction of Eric in Borg (2001) when he felt confident, in this case Emma’s behaviour seemed to be related to her possible lack of explicit knowledge of the grammatical item concerned and her lack of confidence in the explanation she thought she could provide. This lack of confidence was confirmed afterwards in class and in the SR



session. After explaining to the students that “it’s redundant to use [...] two forms of the same verb [together]”, she told them: “I don’t know if you cannot, but it doesn’t sound, doesn’t sound good” (**ibid.**). Then, when asked to comment on this in the SR interview, she stated that she had felt doubtful when answering the question and said: “I didn’t want to commit myself to saying ‘they *cannot* go together because it’s a grammar rule’” (**ibid.**).

All in all, the first impression one gets when observing Emma teaching grammar is that of a teacher with an easy confidence in her KAG. Most of the times she provides immediate responses to students’ questions, includes relevant examples and L1-L2 comparisons in her explanations, and shows readiness to filter learners’ output and to make spontaneous comments about that. However, a closer look at her actions and explanations might also reveal she lacks some confidence. This is reflected essentially in her recurrent use of hedging expressions and epistemic stance adverbials of doubt when explaining rules and uses. Further evidence can be found in her reliance on the materials and her inclination to repeat the rules she has studied from them to ‘play safe’, as well as in her occasional use of strategies to ‘protect’ herself such as bouncing learners’ questions back to them to allow herself more time to think. Finally, her lack of confidence might also be manifested in her fear for losing control and not being able to respond to the students’ inquiries during impromptu grammar work, and the rare occasions on which she engages in the incidental teaching of grammar content (see 5.1.2 and 5.1.9).

#### 5.3.4 Grammatical terminology

There are some manifestations of Emma’s knowledge of grammatical terminology in the SR interviews. First, she made reference to students’ mistakes or contributions using specific grammatical labels. For instance, when she corrected “you must have seen it” for “you should have seen it”, she said the learner “was using a modal in the perfective tense or form” (**SR1, E8**). Second, she showed knowledge of grammatical terminology when she named the grammar items included in the textbook. Examples are the names of tenses (e.g., PPS, PPC, present simple, past simple, and past perfect), some adverbials (e.g., ‘linking words’), personal pronouns, and modal auxiliaries. Third, she occasionally used metalanguage to provide explanations, for example, when she said: “So instead of explaining that ‘while’ connects to *phrases* and *clauses*, saying the

name of the *conjunction ...*” (**SR1, E10**). Similarly, in her classes, Emma employed grammatical terms when explaining some grammar content to the students like the distinction between ‘would’ in conditional sentences, to express past habits, and to show future in the past; the use of ‘state’ and ‘action’ verbs; the difference between the prepositions ‘on’ and ‘by’; the use of word categories (nouns vs. verbs); and the uses of and distinction between PPS and PPC. In the GJT, she also made use of some grammatical terminology when naming the mistakes and sometimes when explaining them. The grammatical labels she used were: verbs (state verb, finite verb, modal verb, and third person singular), participles (present and past participles in participial phrases), nouns (plural), adjectives, adverbs, articles, prepositions, tenses (past continuous, past simple, and present perfect), subject, object, relative clauses, voice (active and passive), reported speech, agreement, and syntax.

However, there are also instances in which Emma, probably due to her tendency to reduce the complexity of grammar content to the learners, omits to use specific grammatical terminology. Firstly, she provided explanations in class without using any grammatical labels. Such was the case of the use of ‘worth visiting’, the distinction between ‘what do you think about ...?’ and ‘what did you think about ...?’, and the use of different ‘linking words’ (e.g., ‘after’ vs. ‘suddenly’ and ‘just then’). Secondly, she repeatedly used generic terms to refer to specific structures. The one she used the most is ‘expression’, which she mentioned both in class and in the interviews (e.g., to name ‘would’/‘used to’ and ‘adverbials of time’) and which she seems to employ as an ‘umbrella’ term to refer to grammatical items in general, probably because it is safer than using more precise terms. Another generic term is ‘pattern’, which she made use of in the GJT (e.g., to refer to ‘seem + to-infinitive verb’, ‘beg someone + to-infinitive verb’, and ‘to do something to make someone + adjective’). Thirdly, during the presentation of PPS and PPC, Emma first used the correct grammatical labels and then simplified them into misleading terms. For example, she used ‘tense’ to refer to PPC and then replaced it with ‘verb’ on two occasions. Likewise, she used ‘pronouns’ and afterwards employed ‘persons’ and ‘people’: “Do you remember, do you remember the *pronouns* for ‘have’? The *persons* for ‘have’? [...] And do you remember the *people* for ...” (**class 6, SR6 E1**). Finally, she labelled some grammatical points with the wrong term. One case is her use of ‘verb tense’ to refer to ‘would’ and ‘used to’, instead of using, for instance, ‘modal

auxiliary' and 'marginal auxiliary' or simply 'auxiliary'. Another example is the use of 'case' in 'plural case' in the GJT. It is not clear in the context of her corrections what she means by 'case'.

In Emma's answers to the GJT, where she was required to name the grammatical item in each correction, there were 27 instances out of 61 corrections she made in which she did not provide any grammatical terminology (44.26% of the times). It is hard to claim that this fact shows lack of knowledge of grammatical terms since, as explained in 5.3.1 B, her responses are influenced by other aspects than merely her KAG such as personal and situational restrictions and distracting CFs. Moreover, many of the grammatical points she did not name in the task are included in her explanations both in class and in the SR sessions. Nonetheless, the grammar items she did not mention in the task are: *to* infinitive verb (5 times), preposition (4), past perfect (2), past simple (5), present simple (2), past participle (1), genitive case (3), determiner (1), pronoun (3), and noun (1).

In conclusion, the analysis of Emma's use of grammatical terminology reveals that, in general, she is aware of the names of the grammatical aspects she teaches. Manifestations of this could be found in her classes, in the SR interviews, and in the GJT she completed. However, there were several instances in which she omitted to use, simplified, or replaced grammatical terms, probably as a result of her intention to provide short and simple explanations and of her tendency to reduce the complexity of grammar content to the learners. This simplification sometimes results in her using misleading grammatical terminology.

### 5.3.5 Sources of KAG

Emma claims that she has developed her KAG along the years through formal and informal language learning experiences. In addition to her PLLEs, she has learned considerably by being exposed to L2 both in Argentina (e.g., through films) and in English-speaking countries like the UK and the USA. Yet she appears to have built most of her KAG from her teaching experience, primarily through working with textbooks, as is shown in the following passage: "Teachers learn a lot from textbooks. Because they have very short simple explanations for the students and, as we have moved along through so many textbooks, each one adds a different side to one grammar point. I would say that, if you take all the

[unintelligible] textbooks, they would complement each other in some knowledge about the grammar” (SR3, E1).

### 5.3.6 Summary

The exploration of Emma’s KAG has revealed mostly manifestations of her explicit and implicit KAG, though there have also been a few fuzzy areas in her KAG, in some cases of apparently deviant KAG. The findings also show some evidence of her confidence in her KAG, such as when she filters the input learners receive. There are, however, several instances which unveil some lack of confidence, manifested basically in her recurrent use of epistemic stance adverbials of doubt and other hedging expressions when providing explanations and making comments as well as in her strategies to ‘protect’ herself, her tendency to ‘play safe’ by repeating rules from the materials, and her fear for losing control in class. In addition, the study of Emma’s KAG indicates that, on the whole, this teacher is aware of the terminology of the grammatical items she teaches, though there are also some cases in which she does not use specific terms and provides simplified, sometimes misleading, labels or generic terms, possibly as a result of her inclination to reduce the complexity of grammar content to the learners. Finally, it has been shown that Emma has built her KAG from both formal and informal language learning experiences, but mostly from her teaching experiences, especially from her work with textbooks. In the interest of clarity and organisation, these categories of Emma’s KAG have been described separately, though it must be highlighted that they are all intimately interwoven and, as explained above, what appears to be evidence of her implicit KAG may well indicate lack of confidence in her KAG. See Appendix 7 to read a summary table of Emma’s KAG.

## 5.4 GRPK

### 5.4.1 Nature of explanations

This section describes, with reference to Emma, one important aspect of the *instruction* process of Shulman et al.’s framework of pedagogical reasoning and action: explanations (see Shulman, 1987). There are numerous instances of grammatical explanations (definitions, comments, and demonstrations) in Emma’s classes in the presentations of new structures and in many of the

immediate responses she provides to students' questions and comments. The data reveal salient features of the nature of these explanations, some of which reflect the interaction of different knowledge categories: subject-matter, context, learners, pedagogy, and curriculum (see Andrews, 2007; Hashweh, 2005). First, the sources of information on which she bases her explanations are mainly the textbook materials and grammar books she uses in her classes (see 5.3.5). She also resorts to the effective explanations she was exposed to in her own PLLEs (see 5.2) and to the knowledge she has gained through experience (see 5.1.3).

Second, Emma claims that her explanations and her teaching strategies are always *spontaneous*. This is closely related to the aforementioned habit this teacher has of planning what to teach but not how to teach grammar items, as is shown in this extract: "when I prepare my class, [...] I believe that I'm going to be better if I'm spontaneous. I know that [...], before I go to class, I'm going to be dealing with one grammar point or one strategy [...]. Well, I knew that this was a point that I was going to teach this once. But then I hadn't figured out what I was going to do with it. So these ideas come to my mind while I'm speaking to the students" (**SR2, E2**).

Third, another distinctive feature of her grammar teaching practices is her preference for providing *short* explanations. This finds its cause in the time constraints she faces at school (see 5.5.1), the belief that her intermediate secondary school students might not be able to cope with complex and detailed explanations (see 5.1.3), and her intention to keep the learners' interest high during presentations and discussions: "At this level [...] I think I bring some kind of humour to the class when I'm teaching the grammar, I make it short because I don't want students to become bored. That's why I simplify things" (**SR2, overall questions**). Emma also claims that NNS teachers, unlike their NS counterparts, are better prepared to provide concise explanations (**I2, p. 12**), which is an advantage at a secondary school context (**I1, p. 23**).

Fourth, as shown in the previous point, the nature of Emma's explanations appears to depend very much on whom they are directed to. For instance, in connection with her explanation of the difference between 'to go by bus' and to go on a bus', she said: "[it] is a bit difficult to explain to someone who hasn't got exposure to the ... who doesn't have exposure to the language, to really understand the subtle [...] meaning of one or the other. So I explain shortly" (**SR3, E1**). This might indicate that her explanations in class would be more

comprehensive if her learners were more advanced and showed they had more exposure to L2.

Fifth, possibly due to her tendency to reduce the complexity of grammar content to learners, Emma's explanations appear to contain simple concepts and little or no grammatical terminology. As was explained above, she introduces or discusses one or two grammatical features (e.g., tense uses) at a time and, when she makes sure the learners can handle them, she includes new ones (see 5.1.3). Her explanations are, therefore, graded from simple to complex, depending on the students' understanding of concepts (**SR6, E1; SR7, E1**). Regarding grammatical terminology, she omits the use of specific labels either by avoiding grammatical names altogether or by employing generic, sometimes misleading, terms such as 'expression', 'people/persons' instead of 'pronouns', and 'verb' in place of 'tense' (see 5.3.4).

Sixth, Emma appears to feel confident when she provides explanations. She looks comfortable when she responds to students' questions and comments, when she explains the different grammatical points included in the syllabus, and when she illustrates her discussions with examples. Nevertheless, as was described in 5.3.3 B, her explanations of rules and uses contain a considerable number of hedging expressions and epistemic stance adverbials of doubt, which might reveal some lack of confidence in her KAG.

Finally, Emma sometimes explained rules using negative statements. This was the case, for example, when she elicited from the students the rule for using 'would' to express past habit:

**T:** Now the point is that 'used to' can be used with all these expressions, negative, affirmative, questions, state verbs, er and action verbs. But 'would' is more limited in its use. When *cannot* I use 'would'?

**Sts:** With state verbs.

**T:** With state verbs. So can you mention the most common state verbs?

**Sts:** Have, like, taste? [unintelligible] taste?

**T:** Probably more common in this, in this context.

**Sts:** Be, think

**T:** Any other? OK. [name of student], can you complete this rule? State verbs ...

**St:** [unintelligible] with 'would' [on the BB Emma writes: *state verbs cannot be used with 'would'*] (**SR2, E8**)

When asked about the rationale for expressing the rule in negative form, she said “I don’t know. I don’t know. Stronger? It remains in someone’s memory? I don’t know. Because probably, as ‘used to’ can be, can go with both verbs, I would like to *warn* the students: remember that ‘would’ cannot go with both, cannot go with this” (*ibid.*). Her answer might reveal that she expects her explanations to create an impact on the learners which might help them to memorise rules. This use of negative statements to express rules, along with her inclination to provide short and graded explanations which are shaped on the basis of whom they are directed to, might disclose her constant concern for helping learners, especially ‘weak’ ones, to understand and to remember the grammar content they deal with in class.

### 5.4.2 Techniques

This section involves the second sub-process of the ‘transformation’ process within Shulman et al.’s theoretical framework of pedagogical reasoning and action: *representation*, which entails the identification of techniques to represent the content of instruction to the students (see Shulman, 1987). Emma makes use of a variety of techniques to make grammatical concepts accessible to the learners. These are often combined and take place in her grammar presentations, comments, demonstrations, and the discussions she holds with the students. The application of these strategies discloses the interplay of different knowledge categories such as subject-matter, context, learners, and pedagogy (e.g., Andrews, 2007; Hashweh, 2005).

#### A. Exemplification

A teaching technique Emma employs extensively is exemplification, identified by Johnston and Goettsch as one of the qualities of good explanations (2000: 450). She usually accompanies explanations with examples to convey the meaning of new structures (**SR2, E2/E6**) and to show how they are used (**SR1, E1**). She thinks that some grammatical points cannot be explained just from a theoretical point of view and require more examples than others. For instance, in connection with the use of ‘used to’ and ‘would’ to express past habits, she said: “I think that some of the tenses, you cannot go, you cannot say a lot of theory. You have to, you have to refer to ... to examples.” (**SR2, E2**). Most often, the examples Emma creates are first about her and then, as a touch of humour, she

makes up some referring to the students: “I believe in, specially for example when I make the examples in the tests that I prepare with the sentences that they have to complete, I try to involve all of them, with their names, mentioning them, remembering, I remember what they are good at, or what brings up some humour in the class without being incorrect or politically incorrect, I try to involve all of them” (**SR1, E4-7**). Once she has provided her explanations and examples, Emma sometimes invites the students to contribute with their own examples. On one occasion, she elicited examples of ‘used to’ from the learners taking up a total of six minutes, which appears to be a considerable amount of time given the time constraints at school (**SR2, E6**). Her use of exemplification and humour discloses three pedagogical knowledge domains in operation: “Handling Language Items” (e.g., giving and eliciting relevant examples), “Factoring in Student Contributions”, and “Building Rapport” (Gatbonton, 1999: 42-43).

Despite the fact that most of the times she provides her own examples, Emma argued that giving examples is not an easy task for NNS teachers (**ibid.**) and, when referring to the strengths and weaknesses of being a NNS teacher, she claimed: “I think, or sometimes when you want to give an example, for example, examples don’t come naturally, the examples that I give are the examples well at this moment yes I could say that some of them are the ones that I hear or that I have heard when I have been in the United States or in England, but, in fact, the example that you give your students is the example that is in the book” (**I2, p. 13**). The experienced teachers in Johnston and Goettsch also stress the difficulty involved in giving examples and the role of experience in developing this ability (2000: 453). Yet, considering Emma’s frequent and effective use of her own examples in class, it could be assumed that her comment has more to do with her lack of confidence in her own language awareness than with her actual ability to create adequate and relevant examples.

### **B. Use of L1**

Working in a monolingual context allows Emma to make extensive use of the students’ mother tongue, Spanish, to help them understand grammar content. She uses L1 in two different ways: mostly to provide explanations and occasionally to compare the learners’ L1 and L2.



### a. Explaining in L1

One of the instances in which she resorts to the learners' L1 to explain grammatical points is during incidental grammar teaching. For example, when providing the rationale for using Spanish to explain the structure 'worth + V-ing', she said:

Erm, I have to, to go ...I mean I cannot expand on this. This was about ... just a warm up, a warmer for ... erm for ... I don't know, saying hello to the students, so I went directly to the meaning ... and some students understood. I have to make sure that all the students ... I mean some understood it immediately. Probably at first, when I said it is worth visiting, two or three students already knew that that meant 'vale la pena visitarlo'. But sometimes after repeating, I don't know, three times, one or two students don't ... don't really understand the meaning. So I make sure that all of them understood. [...] I make sure that it is understood because I think that sometimes you might think that it is not an important point, I'm *not* teaching this point, I'm just making use of an opportunity. But, in using this, I cannot forget those students, and say well, if they didn't understand it, never mind, because it's not an important point, I wouldn't say that. So I make sure that even it is incidental, all the students should understand. **(SR1, E1)**

She justifies her use of L1 in this case on the grounds that: 1. it allows her to save time and, since they are in the warming up stage, she should not devote much time to the discussion of the new item; and 2. it provides all learners with equal opportunities to grasp the meaning of the new grammatical point, regardless of whether this content is the focus of the lesson or not. The latter aspect reflects the aforesaid concern she has always shown for those students who find it most difficult to understand and learn English (see 5.1.1 and 5.2.2). Consistent with her first argument, in the incidental teaching of another grammatical structure (use of 'should' in the perfective form), she resorted to Spanish because it was 'short' and 'time-saving': "Again, short version. I resort to L1 ... Yeah. Time-saving. There's no point in explaining and a long explanation" **(SR1, E8)**. This reinforces the idea that explaining in the students' L1 allows her to convey the meaning of a new item more quickly and thus serves her the purpose of offering short explanations in a school setting with time constraints. This echoes the rationale provided in Pahissa and Tragant (2009) by another secondary EFL experienced teacher (coincidentally called Emma) with respect to

the use of L1-L2 comparison and translation: they offer “the shortest path to her student’s mind [sic]” (2009: 52).

In addition to the time-saving nature of explaining in L1, Emma thinks that this technique is useful to check the learners’ understanding of new grammar features. In the following extract, they are dealing with the use of ‘would’ to express past habit and, instead of resorting to L1 herself, she invites the students to do so and to explain what she has just said:

**T:** [...] I would go, I would go to the merry-go-round, listen, I would go to the merry-go-round every Friday and I ... I used to be *very* good, I used to *be* very good at the merry-go-round. I would pick the ring like twice or three times in an afternoon. So then I got, I usually got two or three free rounds. OK? What did I say?

**St2:** Que ibas a la calesita [unintelligible] no, que ibas a los ... al [that you went to the merry-go-round [unintelligible] no, that you went to the ... the] merry-go-round every Friday.

**T:** OK. One by, one by one. [name of student]

**St2:** Que ibas [that you went] on Friday, Friday or Sunday?

**Sts:** Friday.

**St2:** Que ibas los viernes a la calesita [that on Friday you went to the merry-go-round].

**T:** After school. I used to go after school.

**St2:** Ibas a la calesita y sacabas la sortija tres, hasta tres veces por día [unintelligible] [you went to the merry-go-round and picked the ring three, up to three times per day]

**T:** Good. I used to, no, no, I used to be very good.

**St3:** Ah, que era buena [Ah, that you were good]. (**SR2, E7; my translation**)

This technique sometimes serves the two-fold purpose of checking not only that the students have understood her explanation but also that they have paid attention to her: “I usually give an explanation in English and say ‘please, say what I said in Spanish, or in English even, explain to the class what I have just said’ [to check] that they have understood or that they have paid attention, which are two things that I have to check in the class, that they are paying attention, sometimes what I explain is not what they understand” (**SR8, E5**).

This use of L1 to explain grammar appears to be restricted to complex points and to instances in which she thinks the learners will not be able to express themselves in L2 (**SR8, E7**). When they are dealing with simple

structures or when they are reviewing some items they have already studied, Emma encourages them to give explanations in L2. She claims that she is not sure if it is always safe to use Spanish in explanations (**ibid.**). This might indicate that she knows the limitations of this technique and that she makes an informed use of it.

### **b. Comparing L1-L2**

Apart from explaining grammar content in L1, this teacher occasionally engages in the comparison of L1 and L2 structures. This strategy has also been reported by other experienced teachers, in most cases because they had found it useful as L2 learners and users themselves (see Borg, 1998a, 1998b; Pahissa and Tragant, 2009). This was the case, for instance, when Emma attempted to explain the grammatical inaccuracy of the sentence ‘He has been being aggressive all his life’:

**T:** [...] One reason could be .. this verb cannot be used in this tense. That could be ... a very simple reason. The other could be that it's redundant to use the two verbs ... two forms of the same verb. Has been being, being. Both are the correct reasons. [...] Spanish has something like that. Er ...

**St2:** He estado siendo [I have been being].

**T:** He estado siendo, he estado estando. He estado. He estado comprando, si, pero he estado estando, no. He estado aquí durante dos horas. Pero he estado estando? [I have been being, I have been being. I have. I have been buying, yes, but I have been being, no. I have been here for two hours. But I have been being?] No. So something similar to that. Redundancy ... OK. (**SR8, E5; my translation**)

Even though her explanation was inaccurate as it is perfectly possible in both languages to use the verb ‘to be’ in PPC and to have two forms of the same verb together (e.g., ‘he’s been being aggressive in the last few days’; ‘él ha estado siendo agresivo en los últimos días’), she was able to identify the ungrammaticality in ‘he’s been being aggressive *all his life*’ and appeared to succeed in making the students grasp the essence of her point by comparing the case with a similar one in Spanish (‘he estado estando’). In other words, though the reasons she gave the learners were inaccurate, her L1-L2 comparison was apparently effective and understandable in the eyes of the students since the two students who had raised the question nodded in agreement after her explanation.

Emma argues that she engages in comparing the learners' L1 and L2 only when she knows this can assist students in making sense of new concepts: "Just to help, I use Spanish sometimes to help them understand and I refrain them from using Spanish when I think that it's not going to help. Because sometimes I say 'no, no, no, no, this time don't use translation. It won't help'" (*ibid.*). This is further reflected in her classes when she explicitly tells the students not to resort to L1:

**T:** Have you finished that book that I lent you? Good. Why not present perfect progressive?

**St1:** Has estado terminando? [you have been finishing?]

**T:** Not translation here. I mean, it doesn't help. Or it won't help. (**SR8, E7; my translation**)

### C. Teacher's repetition

The teacher's repetition of lexical expressions and grammatical structures, which Emma claims is typical of her, can be observed consistently in her classes. She thinks that this technique makes important contributions in the process of helping students to grasp and fix new lexical and grammatical items. During incidental grammar teaching, repetition is used as a touch of humour and to make the new grammatical feature noticed and sometimes remembered by the learners:

[...] whenever I produce or the students produce some language that is new, that I know it is new, I stress it, I emphasise it, I explain the meaning or I translate it, and sometimes I produce like the two or three uses or how it can be used and that's it. [...] So some of [the learners] I realise that when I repeat something and at the same time I make fun of this expression like repeating and repeating and I know that I am repeating something, by the end of the semester some of them remember these expressions. For example, last year I remember that my expression was 'so far so good' as a question. And I repeated that throughout the semester, throughout the year. By the end of the semester the *students* asked me that. So yes, hopefully some will remember some expressions. (**SR1, E1**)

The following extract shows Emma presenting the modal verb 'would' to express past habit and repeating the new grammatical item several times in the example she provides:

But now you can use a synonym to 'used to' and that would be 'would'. You can use it in the same ... erm for example, I will give you an example: when I was a kid I liked the merry-go-round. I liked going to the merry-go-round. I *went* to the merry-go-round. I would go, [...] I would go to the merry-go-round [...] every Friday. I would go every Friday. [...]. I would go, I would go to the merry-go-round, listen, I would go to the merry-go-round every Friday and I ... I used to be *very* good, I used to *be* very good at the merry-go-round. I would pick the ring like twice or three times in an afternoon. So then I got, I usually got two or three free rounds. OK? What did I say? (**SR2, E7**)

When asked about the rationale behind her use of repetition, the teacher said: "what we listen to here, what we hear here, is that I repeat because at the same time I'm like ... making gestures for the students to ... I'm trying to get words from the students so I repeat the examples so that they ... so this is too ... erm some of this repetition accounts for the fact that I'm trying to infer some words or get some words by the students so I repeat the examples so that they follow ... I usually leave unfinished sentences for them to finish, for example." (**ibid.**). She argues she uses this technique, along with gestures, for three reasons: to elicit vocabulary from the students, to help them follow her explanation, and to invite them to complete some unfinished statements. Though her use of repetition in this case seems to be intended to pursue only the second objective, in some of the other classes observed she made use of this technique for further purposes: to elicit words and structures (e.g., subject pronouns in the presentation of PPC, **SR6, E1**), to encourage learners to translate a word or expression (**ibid.**), to complete gapped sentences with verb tenses (e.g., PPS, **SR7, E1**), but, above all, to assist students in understanding and memorising the form and uses of the new grammatical items. An example of the latter reason can be found in the following passage where Emma is dealing with the notions expressed by PPS and PPC:

**T:** [...] Present perfect is number ... that's the symbol of number, no?, number of ... Present perfect simple ... when you want to express number of things done. Yeah? For example, that example of three times, ten books. And this one [PPC], when you want to express what, [name of student]? When you want to express what?

**St2:** The duration of action.

**T:** The duration of the action. 'I've been explaining here for half an hour'. Or feelings ... anger, boredom, tiredness. OK. Imagine this: I'm waiting for [name of student],

three o'clock, I'm waiting for [name of student], three thirty, I'm waiting for [name of student], four o'clock, [name of student] appears. [Name of student], I've been waiting for you, *have been waiting* for you, for *one* hour. Anger, duration, anger, tiredness. Do you understand all those things? You can express them with present perfect progressive. (SR7, E2)

#### D. Metaphors, analogies, and images

In the presentation of PPC, the teacher created a metaphor to illustrate the use of this tense. She said: "He has been bothering me for a long time". This tense, three parts, is used to express *duration*. 'She has been speaking for ten minutes already'. Yes? *duration*, like ... like chewing gum of the action." (SR6, E1). When asked to provide the rationale for her use of the metaphor, she explained:

To be visual, to be ... to have an image. I trust some images for, again, for memory. Because it would be very difficult later on for the students to realise which one they can use. And something that we have internalised for a long time or we internalised a long time ago through experience ... exposition to the language etc. etc. they have to do it in one week; they have to know when to use one or the other because some of the exercises will include that difference. So I try to make it clear for them in which cases one can / will be used instead of the other and when one cannot be used at all. [...] I tend to use if not metaphors, analogies. Yes, it's one of my, my ... the way that I feel that I can explain something, like sometimes referring to something that is more ... real to them, which is at hand, to explain something that is more abstract. (ibid.)

She claims she used the metaphor to create in the students a mental image of the concept which would help make this clearer to them and which would assist them in understanding and memorising the distinction between PPC and PPS. Her use of this metaphor does not seem to be unintentional but meant to compensate for the little time the learners have to internalise the new concept. This means that a CF (time constraints) is, in this case, influencing the application of Emma's GRPK in class. Additionally, the teacher highlights that she uses metaphors and analogies to make abstract concepts more real to the students. This might be related to her belief that learners in a secondary school context are able to manage only simple information, which leads her to simplify

the grammar content she introduces to them by turning a conceptual notion into a tangible or familiar image.

The idea of making concepts accessible to the learners by creating mental images is also manifest when Emma explains one of the uses of PPS, as can be seen in this exchange from class 7:

**T:** 'I've run three times' will be one of the ... one of the ... examples that you're going to take .. to remember present perfect simple. Because when you show number of things, number of things, you use the present perfect simple. Que dije? [What did I say?]

**Sts:** Que cuando decís el numero, un numero, o sea tres, cuatro ... [That when you say the number, a number, that is three, four ...]

**T:** Bien. Va a ser va a ser mi regla .. mi regla entre alumnos, no es una regla que el profesor les diga pero cuando ustedes vean que en una frase se expresan cantidad de cosas logradas [Good. This is going to be my rule .. my rule among students, it is not a rule that the teacher gives you but when you see that in a phrase a number of things are accomplished], you don't say 'I've been I've been running three miles' you cannot say 'I've been running three miles'. You have to say with three you have to say 'I've run three miles'. Good? La explicación seria mas engorrosa que decirles a ustedes 'recuerden que cuando hay un numero es present perfect simple, not continuous' [The explanation would be thornier than simply telling you 'remember that when there is a number, it is present perfect simple, not continuous']. For example, he is a writer, he is a writer. He ... ten books ... he ... ten books

**Sts:** Has written

**T:** Has written. Good. Has written ten books already. Good. (**SR7, E1; my translation**)

In the SR session, Emma explained that she used the word 'number', instead of 'accomplishment', because it better allowed her to help the students to create a memorable visual image of the rule (**ibid.**). She then realised that, by referring to 'number' and not to the notion of 'accomplishment', she was oversimplifying the rule to the learners (see 5.4.3).

### E. Mnemonics

Emma employs mnemonic techniques to aid the learners' memory and help them remember grammatical terms such as the names of tenses. Such is the case, for instance, of PPS and PPC: "[...] sometimes I play with the initials ...

we play like it's 'PP' or is it 'PPP'. Something like it's present perfect or present perfect progressive. Just as a game to memorise." (**SR6, E1**). These techniques will not make grammar content more comprehensible but they will foster the development of specific grammatical terminology and, therefore, will contribute in the process of acquiring new grammar points.

#### F. Humour

Emma makes frequent use of humour in her classes, usually in combination with some other techniques. As explained in section 'A' above, she creates amusing examples using the students' names or referring to funny situations from the classroom context. For instance, when providing examples of the notion of 'duration' expressed by PPC, she said: "[Name of student] has been sleeping ... in class ...' I don't know, 'for three minutes so far'" (**ibid.**). Immediately, all the learners, including the one in the example, burst into laughter. Likewise, this teacher combines humour with repetition to keep the students' level of interest high and to make structures and rules more memorable (see section 'C' above).

#### G. Visual and linguistic support

Another technique which Emma adopts to make grammar content accessible to the learners is the use of visual and linguistic support. With reference to the teaching of PPS, she recalls: "I remember using or drawing ... not timelines but something that would be visual. [...] And I remember using 'recently', 'in the last days', 'since' and 'for'" (**SR8, E1**). In the classes observed, she drew some charts on the board to accompany some grammar explanations: 1- she listed the type of verbs (state verbs) which were used with 'would' to express past habit; 2- in the presentation of PPC, she drew three columns and in each she included the different parts of the verb phrase (e.g., have/has + been + V-ing) together with examples; and 3- she drew a chart to compare the uses of PPS and those of PPC. As regards linguistic support, she designed an exercise in which the students had to create pairs of sentences, the first one using PPC and the second one with PPS. To help them realise what tense to use, she provided specific linguistic prompts such as adverbials and information (e.g., 'I / eat / all day. So far I / eat / 10 sandwiches'; 'He / travel / 2 months. So far he / visit / 20 cities'). (**ibid.**)



### H. Creating a context

Exemplification is the most common tool the teacher employs to create a context for the use of grammatical items. However, Emma sometimes invites the learners to explain the context in which certain statements are used so as to make the teaching point clearer. In the following passage, having introduced a third use of PPC ('to talk about an action that started in the past and stopped recently'), Emma asked the learners to write some sentences based on some cues and discussed with them the context in which these sentences could be used:

**T:** [name of student], can you imagine another context for 'I've been doing the washing up'? So ... 'I've been doing the washing up'

**St:** That's why I have ... my hands are wet.

**T:** That's why I have ...

**St:** my hands wet.

**T:** my hands are wet. OK. **(SR8, E8)**

Emma claims that having the students create a context is one of the most effective strategies to verify whether they have fully grasped the new linguistic item and that they do not confuse it with other structures or uses (**ibid.**).

### I. Grading level of complexity

As discussed in 5.4.1, the grammar content which Emma introduces and provides practice of is graded from simple to complex. Based on her experience teaching at secondary schools, she claims that students in this context are able and willing to handle a limited amount of information at a time. Consequently, to make sure she makes grammar content accessible to the learners, she first presents one or two uses of the new structures and omits to use too much specific terminology. Then she includes further uses and, only if necessary, more complex grammatical terms.

### J. Error correction

Still another technique which Emma uses to help students understand new grammatical aspects is error correction. In addition to correcting mistakes and giving feedback to individual learners, she sometimes provides whole-class

treatment of mistakes which are recurrent and shared by several or most of the students. For example, while providing feedback on the learners' narratives, the teacher carried out some error correction with the whole class in relation to the following mistakes: 'decided to went' and 'arrive to [a place]'. First, she elicited the correct form and then asked them to explain the mistake (**SR6, E4**). Though in this case the structures treated were *to* infinitive verb and preposition, she argues that the grammatical mistakes which are most often discussed with the whole class are in connection with tenses (form and use), specifically those which they have already studied and which they are expected to know. Another experienced teacher, Eric, in Borg (1998a) also reported undertaking grammar work based on the analysis of learners' mistakes.

### 5.4.3 Simplification of content and terminology

The data reveal a marked tendency for Emma to simplify the content she teaches and the grammatical terminology she uses. This seems to derive mostly from her experiential knowledge of secondary schools and their learners, from her awareness of the constraints which CFs at Cortázar School place on her teaching practices, from her deep concern for 'weaker' students, and from her own teaching objectives. She knows from experience, for example, that at secondary school she should avoid teaching more than two rules together. When introducing PPC, she focused on one use of this tense and selected the one ('to express the notion of duration') that better allowed her to differentiate this new tense from PPS, which the students had already studied (**SR8, E1/6**). Though she also introduced two other uses of PPC, her focus along the classes was always on the notion of 'duration'. This simplification was also evident when she presented the form of the new tense since she explained only the affirmative verb phrase pattern and omitted the negative and interrogative ones, though the practice the students completed in the textbook required them to use all three forms.

In addition to limiting the number of grammar features she introduces to learners, Emma often reduces the conceptual complexity of grammatical items and employs teaching techniques which, according to her, allow students to understand and remember her teaching points more quickly. This took place, for instance, when teaching the idea of 'accomplishment' expressed by PPS. Instead of introducing this notion, she told them that whenever they saw a 'number' (she

was referring to ‘numbers’ in gapped exercises where they have to complete with either PPC or PPS), they had to use PPS and not PPC. Possibly aware that this rule was not true in all cases, she created a kind of complicity with them by pointing out to them that this was not a rule which a teacher would give his/her students but that it was ‘her’ rule to be used among the learners (see extract **SR7, E1** in 5.4.2 D). In the SR session, she provided the following rationale:

[...] it’s not a rule that you are going to find in a textbook: it’s numbers; but it’s between them and me. Remember that when there is a number, I should’ve said ‘a number of things that have been accomplished’, but when there are numbers in the sentence you can pay attention to that. I don’t know, I believe in some of these tips that a teacher can tell the students, especially those students that cannot grasp ... the concept, the notion of accomplishment, for example. (*ibid.*)

This extract reveals not only the informal nature of her rule and the complicity referred to above, but also her intention to provide ‘tips’ which might help ‘weaker’ students to understand new concepts. This is why she used ‘number’ instead of ‘accomplishment’ because the former better helped students to create a memorable visual image of the rule. Emma also explained that her rules are simplified on the basis of what the learners need to know to complete exercises in the textbook materials and tests successfully (**SR7, E3**). Her simplification is, therefore, practice- and test-oriented. This is closely connected with the concept of ‘accountability’ referred to in 5.1.1. Two of the EFL experienced teachers in Pahissa and Tragant (2009), Emma and Miquel, claimed they used simple “practical tips” and “rules of thumb” in their secondary grammar teaching practices, and one of them emphasised the preparation of the students for the *selectivitat* exam.

Sometimes simplification takes place because Emma wants to keep explanations simple and to avoid them going off-topic and not because the students might be unable to cope with certain information. For instance, while she was teaching the use of ‘would’ to express past habit and was eliciting examples of ‘state verbs’, the teacher accepted and listed on the board ‘have’, ‘like’, ‘be’, and ‘think’, but overlooked the students’ suggestion ‘taste’. In the SR interview, she explained:

Because ... in the previous semester we worked with three or four verbs that had two meanings: one of the meanings is as an action and the other one is as a state verb. And I would've had to ... go through that explanation again. Because 'taste' can be at one moment an action verb or a state verb. If they used it with 'I would' and 'used to', in that case 'taste' would've been an action verb, like: I used to taste my meal before I ate it. So I didn't want to go into that. I didn't want to go into something that would demand more explanation. Because the use of 'taste' as a state verb would've been: the food that I used to eat ... used to taste horrible. Something like that. I didn't want to go into that explanation at that moment (**SR2, E8**)

It appears that, later on in the same class, one learner asked the teacher if 'look' could be used as both a 'state' and an 'action' verb and she decided to provide a full explanation of the case, which the students could follow easily. This incident might reveal two aspects about Emma's use of simplification: 1. she might simplify the treatment of certain grammatical items if they are not the main focus of the discussion, 2. she might sometimes take simplification to the extremes and underestimate the learners' capacity and willingness to deal with some grammar content and concepts.

There are further instances of and reasons for the simplification of grammar content in Emma's classes. First, she argues it is not necessary to give detailed grammatical explanations if grammar is not the focus of the task and if the learners are dealing with a structure which they have already studied. A simple reference would suffice to activate their knowledge on the topic and continue with the task. For example, she gave a brief explanation of the use of present simple and past simple to talk about either a sports team or a game during a role-play (see extract **SR1, E2** in 5.3.1 B). The focus of the activity was not on grammar but speaking, and present simple and past simple were tenses which the students had studied before. Second, she claims that she sometimes treats grammatical items only superficially because, based on the fact that her students dislike long and detailed explanations, she always intends to keep her feedback comments short and simple. For instance, when a student completed a gapped sentence which read '*suddenly/just then* that, we saw his canoe floating down the river', she told him: "No, because if you have a 'that', you cannot say 'just then that', 'suddenly that' or, no. 'After that' is the correct answer" (**SR1, E10**). When asked why she had decided not to provide a more detailed explanation of the grammatical inadequacy of '*suddenly/just then* that', she said:

[...] it doesn't have to do with the student in itself but it has to do with making the explanation as short as possible. The students, maybe in this sense I know the students, don't want long explanations, don't want you to say well 'just then that', you would be saying this or that, or 'suddenly that' not because you use suddenly alone. Just, I mean, I made it clear, when you use 'after', well I didn't explain all this that when you use 'after' there should be 'after something'. If the something is not present, well one possibility could be 'after that'. What I explained was what couldn't be. In general it can't be 'just then that' or 'suddenly that' (**ibid.**)

Whether her decision to be concise is caused by the learners' dislike for long and detailed explanations or by other factors such as time constraints, it would be possible to presume that some of the instances of simplification in Emma's classes might well derive from her intention to provide short feedback comments and explanations whenever possible.

Finally, as regards Emma's simplification of grammatical terminology, details about the nature of this simplification can be found in 5.3.4. On the occasions when she omitted to use or simplified grammatical terms, she provided the following reasons: it was not explanation time, the focus of the task was not on language, it was not necessary to use specific labels, it was the time to use grammar items and not to name them (**SR1, E2**); the idea was not to complicate grammatical explanations even further (**SR2, E2**); and simpler terms are sometimes more realistic and tangible (e.g., 'persons' or 'people' instead of 'pronouns') (**SR6, E1**). In some cases, she realised that her simplification of terminology was unnecessary since the students were familiar with the specific terms (e.g., her replacing 'tense' into 'verb' in the middle of her explanation) (**ibid.**). The SR sessions revealed that Emma's simplification or omission of grammatical terms was most of the times informed, though there were instances in which she did so unnecessarily, possibly motivated by her ongoing tendency to keep her explanations and feedback comments simple.

#### 5.4.4 Summary

The study of Emma's GRPK has thrown light on the nature of her explanations, the techniques she uses to make knowledge accessible to the learners, and the character of and rationale behind her simplification of grammar content and terminology. First, her explanations appear to be spontaneous, short,

conceptually and metalinguistically simple, graded from simple to complex, and sometimes expressed in negative statements to create a stronger impact on the learners. This nature often varies depending on whom her explanations are directed to. Though she seems to feel confident, her explanations tend to include many instances of hedging expressions and epistemic stance adverbials of doubt, which might reflect some lack of confidence in her KAG. The sources of knowledge on which she bases her explanations are the textbook materials, her positive PLLEs, and her teaching experience. Second, Emma uses a variety of techniques, most of which are meant to attend the needs of 'weaker' students, to compensate for the lack of time available, to help students to understand and memorise new grammatical structures, and to keep their level of interest high. These techniques include the use of exemplification; the learners' L1; the teacher's repetition; metaphors, analogies, and images; mnemonics; humour; visual and linguistic support; and error correction as well as the creation of a context and the grading of the level of complexity. Finally, the exploration of this teacher's GRPK has shown that she tends to simplify the grammar content she teaches and the terminology she uses. This simplification is motivated mainly by her experiential knowledge of secondary schools and their learners, her awareness of limiting CFs, and her constant concern for 'weaker' students. For instance, she reduces the complexity of what she teaches when she intends to keep explanations short and simple since, according to her, the learners appear not to like long explanations or be able to cope with too many items at a time. Simplification also takes place when they are dealing with grammar aspects which the learners have already studied, when grammar is not the focus of the task, and in order to prepare students for the type of exercises they complete in the practice stages and in tests. It has also been found that Emma sometimes simplifies grammar content and terminology unnecessarily, sometimes leading to misconceptions and confusion. Irrespective of the outcome of her teaching actions, there seems to be no doubt that all the decisions this teacher makes are informed by her experiential knowledge and beliefs and are meant to help her students succeed in their particular school context. See Appendix 8 to read a summary table of Emma's GRPK.

## 5.5 Contextual factors

### 5.5.1 Type of institution: State secondary school

#### A. Time constraints

The CF which appears to have the most decisive and immediate impact on Emma's grammar teaching practices is 'time constraints'. Though she claims Cortázar School is the best secondary school context she has ever taught EFL at (few discipline problems, committed families, and students motivated by their peers and because they have passed a very competitive entrance exam), she is constantly beset with time limitations imposed by the institution (**I1, p. 24**). The students miss many classes each semester due to the institutional activities they are required to engage in such as school trips and special events and workshops, and sometimes because of other circumstances like public holidays, strikes, and teacher absenteeism. As a result, there is often no continuity between the classes and the teacher is forced to re-schedule her teaching plans and to work against the clock to be able to cover the minimum objectives set in the syllabus (**I1, p. 24; I2, p. 7; SR2, E1; SI**).

The effect of these time restrictions can be observed in most of the grammar teaching actions Emma takes. First, these time constraints play an important role in shaping the type of approach to grammar instruction which the teacher adopts. Grammar teaching practices are mostly deductive, and content and objectives are commonly made explicit to the students. There is little place for inductive learning and for impromptu grammar work. Second, the selection of content and tasks is book-based and test-oriented. Priority is given to the content which will assist students in completing class activities and tests successfully. The tasks are usually selected on the basis of their controlled, easy-to-check, and time-saving nature, and on whether they help learners to fix new grammatical items quickly and to be exposed to L2 in a short period of time (e.g., gapped exercises and drillings). Activities with a focus on communication are left to the last place, which is why the communication section in each unit in the textbook is seldom covered. Third, time limitations highly influence Emma's teaching classroom decisions and techniques. Her explanations and comments are always meant to be short and to the point, which often leads the teacher to simplify grammar content and terminology. She uses techniques which she thinks will

help students to understand and memorise grammatical points quickly (e.g., use of L1 and images). In process writing, the learners submit only two drafts in a period no longer than two weeks: “it has to be done in two moments. I don’t have many other possibilities to correct. I mean, this process writing has to be done in two moments: writing, correcting, and re-writing” **(SR5)**. Homework is sometimes used to compensate for the classes they miss: “Homework is part of learning because the situation in our classes is that they ... we miss many classes. It’s just natural in the second semester that they are going to miss class for different reasons. So homework is the only way to go ahead, to get ahead in our teaching point” **(SR2, overall questions)**. Because of lack of time, Emma argues she often finds it impossible to attend to individual problems, to use motivating teaching techniques, or to engage in spontaneous discussions. Detailed information about these points can be found in 5.1 and 5.4.

## **B. Institutional issues**

Apart from time constraints, Emma’s grammar teaching practices seem to be influenced by other types of restricting factors imposed by the institution. She thinks that, like other state secondary school settings, Cortázar School offers a limiting context for EFL teaching. Students do not attend EFL classes of their own free will but because these are part of the curriculum and, unlike in lessons at private language institutes, in her classes they are expected to comply with stricter school requirements. Therefore, Emma feels that she cannot assure her teaching will lead learners to become good L2 users; instead she can train them to develop into good students of it. She thinks that grammar teaching helps her to achieve this purpose, especially with ‘weaker’ students, as is shown in the following passage:

[By teaching grammar] I’m providing them with structure, accuracy, whatever that I think they would need to ... become good students of the language. I don’t know if necessarily good speakers of the language. But I think that at this level, secondary level, yeah, I would like them to be good speakers. I mean, hopefully, they will be. But I still think, and I suppose that many teachers might disagree with me, I still think that in secondary school and with a certain limited context like you have to they have to go through tests, they have to behave well, they have to be, I don’t know, students come to this class ... who like English and who don’t like English, students who find the language I mean, it’s not an institute, that’s what I want to say, they don’t come



here on their will, they have to do English, well I think that grammar is a basis that keeps them ... gives them ... a context to fill ... I don't know the word. [...] I think that with my teaching of grammar I'm helping and I'm giving someone a structured context to function. And maybe those are the students that feel ... that don't feel so interested in the language. That would be the weakest students. (I2, p. 10)

In addition, Emma is particularly constrained by the time of the day (early afternoon) in which her classes have been scheduled. In the following extract, she explains why the learners are sometimes talkative and get easily distracted:

Sometimes I feel that, talking or not talking, the problem is another one, that sometimes they are at that time of the day, or they are too tired or they are thinking ... really their mind is somewhere else. [...] Because they have attended class during the morning, they have probably had lunch so that makes them be drowsy or something like that, and they have probably attended another class after lunch and they just want to go home, they are too tired at that time. (I2, p. 5)

This CF has a strong impact on the teacher's classroom dynamics and decisions. In order to increase the students' concentration, Emma makes them work on a large variety of very short activities in one class: "I [do a] very short activity, probably of grammar, and then go to play a game, and then later on read something so as to have some variation in the activities" (*ibid.*). This methodological decision has at times a negative effect on the nature of her classes: "sometimes I ... I go to the other extreme, of making the activities so varied ... to try to cope with their lack of concentration. I mean, I try to vary my activities so much sometimes that they don't have cohesion or unity" (*ibid.*). This lack of unity was observed in her classes since there was no apparent connection in some lessons between the grammar tasks the students completed in the textbook materials, the narrative they were writing, the short story they started to read, and the games they played. Yet grammar tasks followed a coherent sequence, possibly because the teacher adhered to the organisation proposed by the textbook.

### C. Linguistic limitations

In addition to the time and institutional constraints described above, the school context seems to place some linguistic limitations on Emma's grammar

teaching classes. This means that the school setting somehow determines the nature of the language to be taught. For instance, active language is prioritised over passive language (see 5.1.5). This decision to teach active linguistic items and overlook passive ones originates in the amount of exposure to the language point the students receive in the school context and to the opportunities they have to use such content: “in an institute that would be good language to acquire, passive language, but in a school I don’t know how much in this type of class situation how much they will remember that passive vocabulary when it is ... it will not appear later on” (**SR3, E2**). Since this exposure and opportunities appear to be minimal at Cortázar School, Emma has decided to give her full attention to the teaching of active language. Likewise, the teacher claims that she does not deal with subtle conceptual differences between grammatical structures. Such is the case, for example, of the conceptual distinction between ‘would’ and ‘used to’ to express past habits. She states: “In an institute I would go into deeper analyses of words, especially if they are studying for ... I don’t know, international exams where they want to know ... they know the grammar much more. But I don’t know if I would do it here” (**ibid.**). In other words, her expectations are lower at a secondary school context than at an institute and, consequently, she treats grammar content more superficially, prioritising the most recurrent points and their most common uses.

#### **D. Methodological issues**

The school context also appears to shape the nature of Emma’s methodological practice. With reference to the strength of her explicit teacher-fronted grammar presentations, she says: “The strength is that the student knows from the start that we are dealing with a grammar point, that he has to pay attention to the explanation as if it were the first explanation of one ... topic in class, a topic or a concept in mathematics or the first explanation of a teacher of a concept in history or sociology whatever, whichever subject they are dealing with” (**SR6, E1**). She compares her grammar presentations with those in a maths, history, or sociology class, which might indicate that she is fully aware that she is working at a school setting and that language items in an EFL class can be taught explicitly as in any other school subject. Her comment might also show that, in other subjects, topics or concepts are presented in an explicit, teacher-centred manner.

### **5.5.2 Textbook materials**

Given the text-based nature of Emma's classes (see 5.1.12), the textbook materials represent a crucial CF determining the character of her grammar teaching practices. Though the teacher sometimes introduces some changes, these materials exert a significant effect mostly on the selection, nature, and organisation of content and tasks; the integration of linguistic items with skills work; the development of grammatical terminology; and, in general, on the type of input the learners are exposed to, including linguistic and cultural content.

### **5.5.3 Students and other teachers**

Other influential CFs include the people Emma is in contact with at school: the students and other teachers. As regards the learners, they play a crucial role in shaping: 1. the nature of her short presentations and feedback comments since students appear to dislike long explanations, 2. the type of practice she selects (controlled practice with predictable answers) as she claims they are usually not willing or able to work on exercises which provide free practice unless they are given a lot of guidance, and 3. the cohesion among the activities in view of the fact that, given the learners' short attention span and their particular mood at that time of the day, she selects short exercises and makes them jump from one to the other without a clear sense of 'unity'. In relation to her colleagues, they have an impact basically on the selection of content since they all agree on what items to include in their syllabi and tests. All these aspects have been fully discussed in previous sections.

### **5.5.4 Teacher herself**

The teacher herself could also be seen as a CF influencing her grammar teaching practices. For instance, she claims that teaching the same level with the same materials in the previous period has both a positive and a negative impact on her classes. On the one hand, this helps her to anticipate problems and to be better prepared for explanations (**I2, p. 7**). On the other hand, she sometimes cannot recall what she does with each group and, since she prepares the same class for both groups and does not keep a record of what she does in each class, she ends up mixing memories between the groups (**I2, p. 8**). As a result, she forgets to attend to individual problems or needs in subsequent lessons or to

check some homework which she may have given specially to one of the groups. Likewise, personal circumstances such as lack of time and tiredness sometimes affect her classroom practices. For instance, Emma argues she has no time to do research on the issues which arise in class (**SR8, E5**). She also states that she does not plan her classes meticulously either because she is very busy or because she feels lazy (**I2, p. 1**). Finally, Emma's PLLEs, KAG, GRPK, and personality (e.g., tendency to control) naturally have an impact on her practices.

### 5.5.5 Research project

Finally, the present study can be seen as a CF having some impact on the teacher's grammar teaching practices. This was evident in class 8 when, after having discussed the effectiveness of her explanations of the uses of PPC and PPS, Emma decided to create new practice which might help the learners to see the distinction between 'duration' (PPC) and 'accomplishment' (PPS): "after we talked the other day, I thought about creating something for them to do some drilling, oral drilling, and for them to differentiate duration and accomplishment. So I prepared these five sentences for them to say and to write, later on to write" (**SR8, E1**). This means that the reflective activity involved in the SR prompted Emma to take some specific actions. This fact also has some impact on the research project itself since the naturally occurring events which I originally intended to observe have been influenced by the reflective nature of the SR interviews and, possibly, by my presence in the classroom.

### 5.5.6 Summary

The data reveal that the context in which Emma works plays a fundamental role in defining the nature of her grammar teaching practices. Undoubtedly, the secondary school setting and the textbook materials are the aspects which exert the strongest impact. The influence of CFs ranges from decisions at a macro level (e.g., the approach to grammar teaching, and the selection of content and tasks) to features at a micro level (e.g., classroom dynamics and the nature of explanations). It has also been seen across the different sections of Emma's case that there is a close relationship among these CFs, her PLLEs, KAG, and GRPK, each and all of which help explain the rationale behind her teaching actions and behaviour. This relationship will be

described in detail in 7.2. See Appendix 9 to read a summary table of the CFs having an impact on Emma's practices.

## CHAPTER VI SOPHIA

The structure of Chapter VI is the same as the one used in Chapter V. Thus, it is organised into the following sections: grammar teaching approach and grammar teaching practices, PLLEs, KAG, GRPK, and CFs (see introduction to Chapter V, p. 106).

**Table 11** contains a summary of Sophia's grammar teaching practices in the ten classes observed and includes information about the tasks, teacher's actions, grammar content, and the people involved in each grammar episode.

**Table 11:** Sophia's grammar teaching practices

Class / Episode	Task type	Teacher action(s)	Grammar content	People involved
1 / 1-7	Class warm-up, listening	Correcting / not correcting	Discrete grammatical items at sentence level	T + class
1 / 8	Pre-listening	Eliciting listening strategies	Verb forms	T + class
2 / 1	Listening	Eliciting expressions for disagreeing	'not necessarily' – 'I don't agree'	T + class
2 / 2-3	Listening	Eliciting expressions for disagreeing	'I don't agree' – 'I'm not agree'	T + class
3 / 1	Pre-writing: warm-up	Eliciting linking words	Adjectives	T + class
3 / 2	Pre-writing: text analysis	Eliciting connectors	Linking words	T + class
3 / 3	Pre-writing: text analysis	Eliciting connectors	Linking words	T + class
3 / 4	Practice (open cloze), feedback	Checking answers	Linking words	T + class
4 / 1	Pre-writing: warm-up	Eliciting and grouping linking words into semantic categories	Linking words	T + class
4 / 2	Pre-writing: warm-up	Eliciting semantic categories	Linking words	T + class
4 / 3	Feedback	Checking answers, explaining	'such as' vs. 'for example'	T + class
4 / 4	Feedback	Checking answers, explaining	Linking words expressing contrast	T + class
5	-	-	-	-
6 / 1	Pre-reading	Eliciting missing word	Subject, 'I'	T + class
6 / 2	Post-reading	Eliciting patterns	Gerund, 'to' infinitive	T + class
7 / 1	Post-reading	Eliciting distinction between facts and opinions	Adjectives, register	T + class
7 / 2	Post-reading	Eliciting language in opinions	Adjectives, modal verbs and expressions for speculating	T + class
8	-	-	-	-

9 / 1	Grammar presentation	Eliciting info about listening	Reported speech	T + class
9 / 2	Grammar presentation	Eliciting grammar focus	Reported speech	T + class
9 / 3	Grammar presentation	Eliciting use/meaning, explaining	Reported speech, direct/indirect speech	T + class
9 / 4	Grammar presentation, practice	Giving instructions, eliciting tense names	Direct/indirect speech	T + class
9 / 5	Practice, feedback	Checking answer, eliciting tense names, explaining	'going to' in the past vs. past continuous	T + st
9 / 6	Practice, feedback	Checking answer, eliciting grammar names	Tenses, first and second conditional sentences	T + class
9 / 7	Grammar presentation	Eliciting changes in pronouns	Pronouns, direct/indirect speech	T + class
9 / 8	Grammar presentation	Eliciting grammar focus	Reported speech	T + class
9 / 9	Grammar presentation	Eliciting difference between direct and indirect speech	Direct/indirect speech	T + class
9 / 10	Practice	Giving instructions	Direct/indirect speech, tenses	T + class
9 / 11	Practice, feedback	Eliciting grammar names	Direct/indirect speech, tenses, pronouns	T + class
10 / 1	Grammar presentation	Eliciting previous knowledge (use of reporting verbs)	Reporting verbs, 'say' vs. 'tell', indirect object	T + class
10 / 2	Practice, feedback	Eliciting answers, explaining	Direct/indirect speech, tenses	T + st

## 6.1 Grammar approach and grammar teaching practices

### 6.1.1 Teacher style and beliefs

Sophia's work and stated beliefs adhere to a communication-oriented and meaning-focused approach to FL teaching with an emphasis on the development of oral skills. She claims that one of her major strengths is her ability to interact with the students and to make them participate and speak in class (**I2, p. 7**), evidence of which can be found in her extensive use of elicitation techniques and the class discussions she engages the learners in (see 6.4.2). Regardless of whether the focus of a class is a linguistic item, the content of a passage, or an issue raised by the students, she always creates opportunities for meaningful communication. When forced to set priorities because of time constraints (see 6.5.1), Sophia usually selects tasks which promote the development of skills,

especially speaking and listening (**SR1; SR7**). It is through oral skills work that she thinks a language should be learnt, as is shown in the following extract from her diary:

I have always tried to emphasise oral skills, listening and speaking. I don't know why. Perhaps, to me, learning a foreign language has to do with that. I feel that language takes place primarily in oral communication. If I had to learn Italian, German or another language, I would think of learning to speak. I think that speaking is my best developed skill, the one towards which I can make the greatest contribution (**TD, p. 1; my translation**)

With respect to the meaning-centred nature of Sophia's teaching, lexical and grammatical items which are taught incidentally or as part of a lesson plan are treated mostly as chunks (see 6.1.2) and meaning and use are discussed. On very few occasions, an analysis is made of their constituent parts (form) (e.g., reported speech, **SR9 E4-7, 10-11**). Grammar is, to Sophia, a delicate subject within FL teaching (**TD, p. 1**), though she claims she is gradually developing a more natural relationship with it (**I2, pp. 5-6**).

Sophia also values an "immersion" approach to L2 learning where the students are provided with a "broad and rich exposure to the target language" (**I1, p. 19; my translation**). Aware of the limitations of working in a FL context, she thinks schools should "offer learners the opportunity to be in permanent and intensive contact with the foreign language", similar to what is done in bilingual schools in Argentina (i.e. students attend Spanish-medium classes in the morning session and English-medium subjects in the afternoon shift) (**I1, p. 20; my translation**). Given the restricted time (2 hours per week) and few resources assigned to FL teaching in most schools in Argentina, Sophia thinks it is teachers' responsibility to create classroom conditions which promote an authentic use of the language:

I would like that teachers who have only two hours for EFL teaching would be able to recreate ... to make a use of L2 in class which is as authentic and genuine as possible [...] [and which] engages students in the teaching-learning process. [...] I worry about the distorted use of L2 that teachers could make. [...] It doesn't matter if it is a classroom situation; it could be a classroom situation and it could be real. I



expect teachers to engage students [...] and make them interact orally (**ibid.; my translation**)

Meaningful oral communication is without doubt the class objective she gives the highest priority to. Not surprisingly, this also appears to be the aspect which she identifies as her major strength, both as an L2 user and as an L2 teacher (**I2, p. 7**). As will be seen in 6.2, communication, meaning, and immersion are teaching principles closely associated with her PLLEs and her first teaching practices.

### 6.1.2 Grammar teaching: Rationale and approach

Though class observations revealed little focus on grammar in Sophia's classes, she claims that this language content plays an important role in L2 learning (**TD, p. 2**) and that grammar work has increased in her lessons along the years (**AA, pp. 3-4**). She provides four main reasons for engaging in grammar teaching. The first reason and the one she highlighted on several occasions has to do with the impact that grammar awareness work may have on learners' understanding of their own mother tongue:

Focusing on grammar has its value. At this moment and in our context it is important because it helps students to reflect upon their own language [...] since the subject Spanish at school does not include grammar teaching, for example in Polimodal, and making reference to passive voice in Spanish or direct or indirect speech is difficult [in EFL classes] as learners are not aware of them in their own language. *There I see a highly important role that grammar can play, not as contrastive analysis to learn the foreign language, but as a means to help students relate with their own language* (**TD, p. 2; my translation**)

Sophia's FL grammar teaching seems to have a value which is context-defined and which goes beyond the learning of the target language. Learning grammar thus becomes meaningful beyond the FL classroom and contributes to the learners' general academic development. Sophia expressed her concern for Spanish not assisting EFL lessons from the very first interview and stated that FL grammar learning allows students to develop language awareness in general and, therefore, to be able to compare languages and to transfer information from one language to the other (**I1, p. 18**). In this respect, Sophia's interest is not so

much in grammar teaching fostering L2 learning in particular but language learning in general.

The other three reasons relate more specifically to FL learning considerations. First, Sophia expects her students to develop their 'noticing' skills and to become aware of language features by themselves whenever they are exposed to L2 (**I1, p. 16**). Second, she thinks that language awareness discussions are particularly interesting and valuable to Cortázar students since these have a good L1 background knowledge and appreciate the intellectual challenge that these discussions may pose to them (**SR7, E2**). Finally, Sophia values grammar-related discussions as they represent instances of meaningful communication (**SR2, E1**).

The rationale which Sophia provides for grammar work and instruction appears to be consistent with the communicative and meaning-centred character of her classes. It also reveals an interest both in the language knowledge which students bring to class and may gain in class, and in their development as autonomous L2 learners. The rationale, however, makes reference only to the impact that grammar work and teaching may have on enhancing the students' language awareness and noticing skills but not on improving their L2 production:

I am never sure about the impact of what is ... conscious, what is made conscious in the class will have on the student, although writers say this and that, that they will have an impact, that, you know, that making it aware, making the students aware of things will have an impact if not immediate bla, bla, bla. I think that what is interesting to reflect about is the knowledge that they have about the language for the purpose of verbalising it in order to see whether I can put it into words or verbalise it. The impact it will have on the production, I'm not sure about that, I don't know (**SR7, E2**)

Without regard to the reasons she may have for teaching grammar in her classes, Sophia feels that grammar is a language content that she *has* to teach (**I1, p. 16**). First, she has to respond to a pre-established work methodology at Cortázar's EFL department (**I1, p. 17**) in which grammar is a transversal content across the six levels and is agreed by all the members of staff (**SI**). She is expected to include a focus on grammar in the syllabus, tests, and in her lessons. However, unlike her fellow teachers, she enjoys some freedom because, teaching the last level (6<sup>th</sup>), Sophia does not feel the pressure to cover all the contents in the syllabus since there is no colleague teaching a higher level who

might come up and complain about her not teaching a specific content (**I1, pp. 22-23**). Second, she claims that the students “identify [grammar and vocabulary] as the part that *is* the teaching” (**SR7**). Thus, Sophia devotes time to grammar teaching because it might give her classes face validity in the eyes of the learners. Sophia’s decision to teach grammar at Cortázar School, therefore, may be influenced not only by the benefits she claims it may bring to students but also by her necessity to meet the demands of the institution and to satisfy the learners’ expectations.

Regarding Sophia’s approach to grammar teaching, she claims that an explicit treatment of individual grammatical structures does not translate into an immediate use of such items (**AA, p. 2**) and describes her approach to grammar teaching as “more general than specific or analytic” (**I2, p. 7**). She has manifested a keen interest in dealing with whole *chunks* of language and not with discrete grammar points (**ibid.**; **SR2, E1**; **SR7, E1/2**). For instance, in the following three extracts from the same class Sophia was eliciting expressions for disagreeing which the students had listened to on the tape. Three students (**St1, St2, St3**) kept on suggesting incorrect versions of ‘I don’t agree’, especially ‘I’m not agree’:

**Extract 1 (1:20pm)**

**St1:** I’m not agree.

**T:** I’m sorry. Can you repeat?

**St1:** I’m not agree.

**T:** Like this, [name of student]? [she writes ‘I’m not agree’ on the board]

**St1:** Yes.

**T:** OK. Like this, [name of student]? I’m not agree?

**St1:** Yes.

**T:** Is that correct?

**Sts:** I *don’t*.

**St1:** Teacher, I hear it.

**T:** You *heard* it, you heard it. Yes, OK. You heard a phrase with ‘agree’, but what you know tells you that that is incorrect. [...]

**St2:** I not agree or I’m disagree. Or I disagree or

**T:** I not agree, this is incorrect and this is incorrect [she crosses out ‘I’m not agree’ and ‘I not agree’ on the board]. ‘I don’t’ I like. I don’t agree, I don’t agree, all right?, yes?, yes? Please, pay attention to this! People? Pay attention to this. This is important because you say it like this and this is a very ... it’s a mistake that you shouldn’t make. All right? All right. ‘I don’t agree’. Very good. (**SR2, E1**)

**Extract 2 (1:48pm)**

**St3:** I'm not agree.

**T:** I *don't* agree [...] *don't* agree, all right? (**SR2, E2**)

**Extract 3 (1:56pm)**

**St1:** I'm not agree

**T:** I don't agree, I don't agree. Listen. Chicos, ese 'I'm not agree' por ahí viene de 'estoy de acuerdo' porque en castellano como decimos 'estoy de acuerdo' con el verbo ser o estar 'I'm', por ahí decimos 'I'm agree' tomándola o haciendo esa transferencia del castellano de 'I'm agree' o 'I'm not agree' (**SR2, E3**)

In the first two extracts Sophia treated the expression as an unanalysed whole and provided its correct form. The third time, she repeated the correct chunk first and then broke one of the incorrect versions ('I'm not agree') into its constituent parts and gave an explanation in L1 about the negative transfer which she thought the students were making. When asked to explain her actions, she said she had delayed giving an explanation because she was focusing on the function which the entire chunk expressed and not on its individual elements, and that an explanation would not help students overcome the problem. She then expressed she felt more comfortable working with chunks than with discrete items (*ibid.*).

Sophia's preference for focusing on chunks and their meanings and for developing the learners' noticing skills and language awareness might lead us to assume that she follows the principles of a 'lexical' approach to language teaching. Yet her predisposition to avoid or defer grammar explanations and her resistance to engage in an analysis of discrete grammatical structures, which she acknowledged in some SR sessions (**SR2, E1; SR7, E1**), may well be determined by other factors, such as some lack of confidence in her KAG (see 6.3.4), rather than by her adherence to a particular approach to grammar instruction.

### 6.1.3 Grammar content and context

The selection of grammar content is book-based and agreed by all the teachers of the EFL department. They receive no pressure from the institution as to the nature and volume of content they should include in their syllabi. The items selected are then arranged following the syllabus design established by the

school (**I1, pp. 21-22; S1**). Though guided by the coursebook, each teacher is free to include any additional structures which he or she considers relevant for their particular group of learners (**I1, p. 23**). It is worth noting that the grammar items which Sophia dealt with in the classes observed were all included in the textbook units.

Grammar is always contextualised in Sophia's presentations, usually using a context proposed by the coursebook (**SR9, E1-7**). This contextualisation of grammar is coherent with the communicative nature of her language teaching approach. In the case no context is used in the materials, which Sophia thinks is rare in the textbooks they select, she claims she creates a context herself:

It's very unlikely that the grammar point starts ... you know, out of ... that is, from nowhere. In general, if we're working with a book, in general they do have the language in some kind of context. So it's not that it is ... I sometimes don't even think about it because the material we work with generally brings the language in a context. But, if working with ... I don't think that ... that is if I don't have the context I would try to put it into some context (**ibid.**)

In the grammar teaching practices observed, Sophia used either a written text (e.g., a journalist's report) or a spoken one (e.g., interview) provided in the book materials which highlighted the use of the grammar items being introduced. Grammar integration was, therefore, form-driven since the texts were used intentionally to present grammar (see Borg and Burns, 2008). On some occasions Sophia criticised the fact that some texts did not look genuine as they included too many samples of the content under study in a short piece of text:

Perhaps, from the point of view of the ... of the connectors, which is in fact the language point that I wanted to sort of illustrate, erm perhaps [the text] is a bit short. [...] I don't think that in such a short text we could have so many connectors like all together in one short, very short text. Maybe [...] the text has been more than manipulated in order to have these connectors placed in the sentences. So perhaps it would've been [...] more appropriate or more real [...] if the text would've been longer so that the connectors do not appear one after the other as they appear in this case (**SR3**)

Despite this criticism, Sophia never adapted or replaced any of the texts she used in class where grammar structures were overused and sometimes misused.

In other words, she did not 'filter' the content of the materials which, in her opinion, was not entirely appropriate (see Andrews, 2007: 44-45) (see 6.3.2).

Sophia also stated that the context which textbooks provide and which teachers use is sometimes limited and, as a result, learners end up obtaining a restricted view of the nature of the language used in certain discourse types. In class 7 Sophia was eliciting the distinction between facts and opinions when a student suggested that the latter contained more informal language. Sophia responded saying that, though his suggestion may be correct in some cases, it was not altogether true since it was possible to express an opinion, for instance in written discourse, using formal language (**SR7, E1**). Sophia then hypothesised that the reason for the student's misconception may be the restricted context samples which coursebooks and teachers typically expose learners to:

I think, maybe, [...] that we tend to talk about opinions in English language teaching in books in oral conv/ in oral exchanges. Usually books include opinion in oral exchanges. Let's say opinions, preferences, you know, all this is introduced by 'I think' or 'I believe'. [...] So maybe, maybe, I think that the learner identifies the opinion with the oral piece of discourse [...] That's what I speculate but I don't know, maybe he was thinking about oral exchanges and because of ... generally these oral exchanges that we encourage tend to be more informal, maybe that's why he said informal (**ibid.**)

Though Sophia's response to the student's suggestion was correct and functionally appropriate, she did not provide him with a different context or examples to show that opinions could be expressed with formal language. Instead, she continued eliciting other ideas to differentiate opinions from facts. It could be argued that her mediation of learner output was, in this case, incomplete (see Andrews, 2007: 44-45).

In relation to register as a content to teach, Sophia stated that they deal with levels of formality occasionally and only in connection with oral discourse. The learners are encouraged to see how the relationship between the participants in an oral conversation shapes the language they use (**ibid.**). Sophia explained that the language discussions generated are held not at a grammatical level but in connection with the use of certain expressions:

[...] we tend to associate certain expressions, the use of certain forms or certain expressions with a certain level of formality, with being more formal or less formal. [...] We don't go into really grammatical explanations. [...] For example [...] maybe the use of 'could' instead of 'can' for requiring, for asking for things. I mean, in that sense the choice of forms. [...] it's usually the chunk rather than an analysis, a grammatical analysis. Because, apart from that, that is usually, I don't know if it is good or not, that that is the way in which they're usually dealt with in the textbooks. The textbooks for levels of formality in relationship to the development of oral language do not usually concentrate or focus on grammatical analysis, but rather on the use of the choice of one form instead of the other or one chunk instead of the other. They do not encourage that type of analysis. And I don't do it. But it's not ...that is what happens in the book, but at the same time I think that it is my choice to do it like that (**ibid.**)

Two aspects are worth highlighting from this extract. First, Sophia consistently favours the treatment of language *chunks* instead of the analysis of individual grammatical structures. As explained above, her approach to language teaching is meaning-oriented with a focus on the function or meaning which pieces of language convey. Second, Sophia vindicates her approach claiming that it is also the one adopted by the textbooks she uses, though she is not absolutely certain about the effectiveness of such approach ("I don't know if it is good or not"). Her reliance on coursebook materials is further explored in subsequent sections.

#### **6.1.4 Grammar presentations: Explicit - inductive**

Sophia's grammar presentations are all explicit and inductive in nature. Her grammar teaching practices include the use of techniques such as exposure, elicitation, and discussions which encourage students to engage in discovery learning (see 6.4.2).

One simple yet clear example of the type of inductive teaching Sophia undertakes can be found in the presentation of gerunds and infinitive verbs. Sophia created two versions of the same text with some verbs in boldface. In one version the verbs highlighted were only those followed by gerunds and, in the other one, those verbs followed by *to* infinitive. She gave one version of the text to half the class and the second version to the other half. After reading the text and discussing its content ('strategies to learn English'), she asked the students

to look at the verbs in the text and find patterns. This is Sophia's opinion about this technique:

It is a technique where they have to find common elements, if there are any. [...] I think that that is something that they tend to do. That is, trying to arrive at the common elements or what is general ... I think it's good, I think I like it. The only problem with working with trying to find what is in common or what is in general would be the amount of examples I could give the learners. In that sense we're always restricted. [...] a better approach would be to give one day a text like this and to work with the text ... say, not asking them to focus on that, then maybe next class we approach a text again with further examples of these structures, and then maybe, maybe there we could sort of ask the learners to find common elements [...] think about this without eliciting from the teacher. [...] That is, students could build certain hypotheses about elements of the text on their own. [...] But they would need more exposure. [...] The exposure was limited. [...] More exposure; more exposure. I think that they would sort of arrive at many more grammatical conclusions on their own than if we ask them for it. But I think that we all tend to work like that in many institutes or schools because in schools we don't have that much time **(SR6, E2)**

Sophia's preference for encouraging discovery learning was evident in the ten classes observed. Yet the inductive process the learners went through was always teacher-guided, a feature which she makes reference to in the extract above. Sophia suggests alternative techniques she could have used to make inductive learning more student-centred and meaningful to the learners. However, the use of such techniques require more exposure to the language, an aspect which she is restricted to offer given the time constraints posed by the school context (see 6.4.2 and 6.5.1). The idea of highlighting the verbs in boldface, which could be seen as a restricting factor in the process of discovery learning, was meant to find a solution to time restrictions in her classes since it offered "a quick way to get to the point" (**ibid.**). This example illustrates the interplay of two different knowledge categories in Sophia's grammar teaching practices: context and pedagogy (see Andrews, 2007; Hashweh, 2005) (see 7.2.2).

A longer and more sophisticated grammar presentation was that of reported speech. She made use of the aforementioned inductive techniques to activate the learners' previous knowledge, to elicit information about the context in which the language item was immersed and the meaning/use of the new



structure, and to guide the students in the process of discovering the rules for the changes in form when reporting direct speech. Like in the example above, inductive learning was teacher-led in every stage of her presentation.

**Table 12** shows the structure of the presentation of reported speech and a brief description of the purpose of each stage (**SR9, E1-11**):

**Table 12:** Structure of presentation of reported speech

Stage	Purpose
<b>Context</b>	To expose students to the new content in two relevant discursive contexts: a. an interview between a detective and a journalist (listening and reading / exposure to samples of direct speech); b. the journalist's report of the interview (reading / exposure to samples of reported speech).
<b>Focus + Name + Previous knowledge</b>	To introduce grammar focus and to assign it a name. To encourage students to share what they know about the new grammar item.
<b>Meaning/Use + L1 – L2 comparison (types of speech)</b>	To discuss the meaning of new item. To encourage learners to reflect upon the new structure in L1 and to compare L1-L2 structures. To introduce notion of direct and indirect speech with the use of examples.
<b>Context</b>	For the students to identify examples in context (interview and report) and differences between direct and indirect speech.
<b>Form</b>	For the students to reflect upon the changes in form (tenses, pronouns, and time/place expressions) and to analyse examples to discover rules. To discuss briefly about types of reporting verbs.
<b>Round-up: summary</b>	To put all the information discussed in class together in one chart.

Sophia explained some aspects about each of the stages in her presentations. First, the language items she presents are always contextualised in a relevant piece of discourse, usually one provided by the textbook (see 6.1.3). Second, making the grammar focus explicit at the beginning of the lesson and assigning it a name are steps that Sophia does not always include in her presentations (**SR9, E2**). In this particular case, she “wanted [her students] to realise that the lesson [had] a focus on grammar and that the name of the grammar point [was provided] [in the title of the unit]” (**ibid.**). She also said that she intended to help learners develop some grammatical terminology because these are “intermediate students who can handle this type of language” and because she thinks that “it is only natural that they use grammar names to talk about grammar” (**ibid.**). Her decision to make them aware of and develop grammatical terminology seems to be based both on CFs (i.e. on whether the textbook unit makes them explicit and on the learners’ language level and

capacity to understand and use specific technical labels) and on the potential that learning jargon may have to facilitate communication when talking about grammar. The latter reason echoes the rationale given by another experienced teacher, Eric: it provides a “shared means of communication about language” (Borg, 1998a: 20). In this class the students completed an activity in which they had to write the names of the tenses used in examples they took from the interview and report. Much to Sophia’s surprise, most learners had difficulties recalling tense labels or misused them, though they were all tenses they had studied in previous levels. Sophia explained that this was probably due to the fact that the use of grammar labels had not been consistent in her classes (**SR9, E11**). Despite Sophia’s manifest interest in helping students develop appropriate grammatical terminology (**ibid.**), she seemed to keep the use of grammar labels to a minimum (which may originate in her preference for dealing with chunks of language instead of discrete grammar items) and there were occasions when she adopted confusing generic terms. In some cases she was aware these terms were misleading (e.g., she used ‘persons’ instead of ‘personal pronouns’; **ibid.**) but in some others she was not (e.g., the use of ‘connectors’ to refer to ‘subordinate conjunctions’, ‘coordinate conjunctions’, and ‘prepositions’ **SR3, E3**) (see 6.3.3). In either case, she did not ‘filter’ her own classroom output to ensure that it was conceptually accurate (see Andrews, 1999b; 2007).

Third, Sophia’s interest in the students’ previous knowledge was evident in most of her teaching practices, not only when teaching language points but also when introducing a new topic and when doing skills work. The pedagogical knowledge domain called “Factoring in Student Contributions” (e.g., language awareness) appears to be in constant operation in this teacher’s practices (see Gatbonton, 1999: 43). In the presentation of reported speech, Sophia justified the elicitation of the learners’ previous knowledge saying: “I wanted to see what they knew about it and what they didn’t know. Because if they knew or if they had more knowledge on the subject, then that might’ve produced a different kind of development than from the one it went. [...] Or at least [I wanted to] give them room to say what they knew” (**SR9, E2**). Her aim appears to be twofold: to help learners build on what they know about the topic individually and as a group, and to give presentations which are tailor-made and thus meaningful to the students. Given her concern for the development of oral skills, Sophia might also use the

elicitation of previous knowledge as an opportunity to promote meaningful communication in the classroom.

Fourth, Sophia invited the learners to discover the meaning/use of reported speech by reading examples from the texts. Their first attempt was to give her a grammatical rule, to which she immediately responded: “Don’t give me the rule. Don’t give me the rule. You have to pass, you have to do this. Don’t give me the rule. Explain to me [...] in what situations we use reported speech, not the grammatical rule. So first we have to know what it is.” (**SR9, E3**). This clearly shows that Sophia’s first priority is meaning. Then, to make her teaching point clearer, she encouraged students to reflect upon the use of direct/indirect speech in L1 (see 6.4.2 C). This reveals the importance this teacher assigns to whatever contribution students can make to the learning process, in this case their knowledge of L1 (“Factoring in Student Contributions”, see Gatbonton, 1999: 43). Moreover, her use of L1-L2 comparison reinforces her idea above that transfer from one language to the other can assist learners in developing language awareness.

Fifth, Sophia asked the students to go back to the texts used in the first stage (*context*) to find examples of direct and indirect speech and thus exemplify the distinction she had made in her previous explanation. She justified her selecting the context provided by the textbook claiming that both texts were relevant because they related to the topic of the unit (“jobs”) and that limiting CFs (“questions of time, organisation, and resources”) often force teachers to rely too much on the book materials (**ibid.**) (see 6.5.1). This echoes Grossman et al.’s claim that “given teachers’ lack of time, the textbook provides a convenient source of relevant facts and information” (1989: 28).

Sixth, the students worked on the examples taken from the texts to derive rules related to form. She divided work on form into four steps: tenses, pronouns, time and place expressions, and reporting verbs:

I thought that, because of [the learners’] characteristics, a sort of division, because [...] sometimes they have with grammar certain difficulties, I thought that the division was going to help. The division is really the one suggested by the book, the one about the changes in tenses, and the changes in pronouns and time and place expressions. And then, about the reporting verbs, I don’t remember how it appears. I remember I wanted to say something about ‘say’ and ‘tell’, and the other reporting

verbs, just mentioning them. [...] In fact, this is mostly what the book brings, this organisation **(SR9, E4)**

Though this passage further confirms her reliance on the textbook, Sophia appears to make an informed and deliberate use of it. In this case, she thinks that what the book suggests helps her learners overcome their grammar learning difficulties. This reveals her concern for approaching L2 teaching in a way that is responsive to her students' needs and profile (see 6.4.1).

Finally, summarising, which was the last stage of her presentation, was not suggested by the textbook but added by Sophia. She uses this stage to bring all the information discussed in class together: meaning and use, form and rules, grammatical terminology, and key examples. In general, she creates a chart or table and completes it by eliciting information from the students (see 6.4.2 D and F).

The structure of Sophia's grammar presentations is not fixed. Sophia claims that, though her presentations are similar to that of reported speech, there are some variations depending on the nature of the grammar point and the group of students. Sometimes she skips some of the stages described above or uses the same number but in a different order. Her presentations are shaped, therefore, by the interaction between her knowledge of subject matter and her knowledge of learners (e.g., Andrews, 2007; Hashweh, 2005). Of all the stages, there are some which are always present in her presentations: "The idea of the context, the idea of meaning and use ... the idea of the examples is also part, the idea of the discussion of the form and the round-up" (**ibid.**). Most of these stages are precisely aspects which she recognises as her strengths when teaching grammar: to provide some context so as to show how the new grammar item operates within a whole piece of discourse, to discuss meaning and use, and to round up (**ibid.**). The weakness she sees in her grammar presentations is that these are sometimes a bit too long and tiring and include too much information for the students to remember (**ibid.**). Yet, though the presentation of reported speech took the whole lesson, she identifies some advantages in having an entire class devoted to grammar: "I believe in grammar lessons. I think that a grammar lesson could stand as a unit and could be more memorable for the students remembering that perhaps that class was devoted to grammar and they

worked on a certain grammar point and maybe it stands out as ... as one class that is devoted to that" (**ibid.**).

The stages she prioritises in her presentations, her strengths, and her reason for teaching whole grammar lessons disclose Sophia's L2 teaching values and practices: a focus on meaning and the analysis of language in relevant discourse, the use of examples to promote discovery learning, and a tendency to round up at the end of a class so that all pieces of information are brought together and make sense to the learners. Additionally, Sophia's grammar presentations can be regarded as being tailor-made and aimed at attending the needs of her particular group of learners.

### 6.1.5 Grammar practice

The grammar practice Sophia provides in class and as homework is recurrently controlled with closed-ended answers. In the case of in-class grammar practice, some tasks (e.g., completing a table with examples from a given text and writing the name of the tense used) are part of the presentation stage and are aimed at making students work on examples and discover rules related to form (see 6.1.4) (**SR9, E4**). Some other activities, which require that learners work in pairs or groups to discuss alternative answers and agree on one, are intended to increase their knowledge of the new grammar point (e.g., completing an open cloze with linking words) (see 6.4.2 B) (**SR3, E4**). Once grammar items have been presented, students sometimes work on what Sophia calls "more traditional exercises". For instance, in connection with reported speech, they completed exercises where they had to work on the "series of changes that are made mechanically on one sentence and the other without necessarily making any reference to other aspects related to [...] use or the context" (**SR10, E2**). Finally, some tasks are meant to offer learners the opportunity "to continue exploring further possibilities about a grammar content which they have already understood rather than to practise such item" (**AA, p. 3; my translation**). Except for the 'traditional' exercises, the grammar practice which Sophia provides intends to expose learners to L2 and thus to promote discovery learning and to enhance their understanding of the meaning and use of new grammar content.

Another feature of Sophia's grammar practice is that it is hardly ever integrated with skills work, especially with the receptive skills. Sophia claims that,

though “[grammar and listening] are not two independent domains” (e.g., grammar can be used as an aid to interpret spoken texts), she is not sure about “how much of their attention [the learners] can devote to both things at the same time” (**SR1, E8**). Yet she does integrate grammar with writing and speaking when she provides feedback on students’ compositions and when she occasionally corrects them during oral contributions (see 6.1.6). In this respect, aware of the difficulty learners experience when speaking, Sophia claims that she is more lenient when assessing their oral production than when correcting their written work (**I1, p. 17**).

In the final interview, when asked to reflect upon her grammar teaching practices in the ten classes observed, Sophia stated that she felt more practice was needed:

I was thinking about perhaps the fact that there wasn’t that much practice, there was more time devoted to explanation or to presentation than to the actual practice [...] Most probably because of time restrictions. There should’ve been more ... other instances, other activities in which that ... grammar could’ve been used or, you know, could’ve emerged. I don’t know. I think that there are instances of practice missing. But I think maybe it was because of a question of time, mainly because of a question of time. In fact, we could’ve devoted, I don’t know, I think I have about three more classes or four, I don’t remember, I don’t remember, before the exams. So really we could devote one whole month to working with reported speech in different circumstances, in different cases, you know, in speaking, in writing, I don’t know, there could’ve been thousands of things probably to do (**I2, p. 5**)

This extract shows how CFs (‘time restrictions’, see 6.5.1) shape the nature of Sophia’s grammar teaching practices (‘little practice’). To compensate for the lack of time, she often assigns homework which, though she is not sure it fosters learning, allows students to get further examples of the new language item and to be in contact with L2 outside the classroom, especially when they are absent from classes (**SR6, grammar practice**). The extract also reveals her intention to integrate grammar with skills work if she had more time available.

### 6.1.6 Error correction in oral contributions

During oral contributions Sophia was observed to correct mostly, if not exclusively, grammar mistakes, more specifically discrete grammar items at the

sentence level. She describes the nature of the mistakes she corrects as follows: 1- structures learners commonly use (e.g., ‘she said me’); 2- mistakes that are meaningful/useful to correct (e.g., the use of tenses); 3- mistakes which learners easily understand as such; 4- mistakes that sound too bad and that are so different from “the native speaker norm” that they may turn the interlocutor off (e.g., ‘the school of David’); and 5- mistakes which do not take long to correct and are easy to treat (**SR1, E1-7**). Sophia also explained that she tends to overlook grammar mistakes when the task the learners are completing has a heavy cognitive demand, when the focus is on the content which they are communicating and not on accuracy, and when the emphasis is on letting ideas flow and helping students to get going (**ibid.**). The description and rationale which Sophia provides evince her concern for attending to learners’ needs and capacities, for helping students to become effective and fluent L2 users, and for coping with time constraints.

#### 6.1.7 Summary

Sophia’s L2 teaching beliefs and practices appear to be highly consistent in the ten classes observed. Her manifest interest in communication, meaning, the idea of immersion, and the development of oral skills is evident, for instance, in her extensive use of elicitation techniques, the opportunities she constantly creates for meaningful communication, her concern for maximising the students’ exposure to L2 (e.g., through homework), and the analysis of examples in relevant discourse. Her approach to grammar teaching is also meaning-oriented, centring on the treatment of contextualised chunks of language and their meaning and use rather than on the analysis of discrete grammatical items. Sophia also claims to believe in discovery learning, in increasing language awareness, in promoting learners’ active participation in the learning process, and in adopting teaching procedures which are tailor-made. Her grammar presentations are typically inductive in nature, encouraging learners to reflect upon their L1, to compare L1 and L2, to engage in challenging discussions about the meaning of structures, and to identify examples in context and analyse them to infer rules related to form and use. The structure of her presentations is not fixed, variations depending mostly on the nature of new grammar points and the students’ needs and background knowledge. The stages she prioritises (meaning/use, context, and round up) are coherent with the meaning-focused

character of her teaching and her concern for assisting learners in making sense of the different features of the new grammar item introduced. Her rationale for correcting oral mistakes is based on students' language learning needs and capacities and is intended to help them become effective and fluent L2 users. Finally, the description of Sophia's grammar teaching practices has revealed that many of her decisions and actions are highly determined by CFs, mainly time restrictions. It is not surprising, therefore, that the inductive techniques she uses are essentially teacher-led, that the selection and contextualisation of grammar content are exclusively textbook-based (though she criticises aspects such as the artificial and limiting nature of the context which the textbook includes), the almost inexistent integration of grammar with skills work, and the little grammar practice provided. All these characteristics provide the basis for the exploration and better understanding of the experiential, cognitive, and contextual factors which will be discussed in the following sections. See Appendix 10 to read a summary table of Sophia's engagement with grammar teaching.

## 6.2 PLLEs

### 6.2.1 Private classes (age 8-9)

Sophia started taking EFL private classes when she was 8 years old. Classes took place in a relaxed, non-institutional context as they were taught either at the teacher's house (in the kitchen) or, since the teacher's mother was a school caretaker, at that school after class. She attended classes along with three/four other students. The idea of studying English was Sophia's mother's, who had relatives in Canada and wanted to keep in touch with them by mail:

I guess my mother was always thinking about her family in Canada. So she expected [someone in our family] to learn English so as to be able to speak with them. [...] I now remember that I had cousins of my age in Canada and they wrote letters to us in English. So my mother asked me to take the letters to my English teacher so that she could sort of translate them to me. I remember that at that time there was a fashionable music band called The Monkey. So my cousin sent me photos of them and told me about them [...] All this aspect about music, you see, is important **(I1, pp. 3, 5; my translation)**



Though her reason to study English first came from her mother, Sophia soon felt that she had her own motivation: to keep in contact with her adolescent English-speaking cousins and exchange information about something she loved, music bands. Yet she depended on the teacher to understand the letters: “I waited for the teacher to tell me what the letters said because I couldn’t understand connected discourse for this was not the way we learned English in class. Besides, it was not like today that one is in contact with real language use. At that time [...] I had no exposure to anything in English, neither music, nor radio or television” **(I1, p. 6; my translation)**.

Sophia recalls that her private classes were very different from EFL lessons nowadays:

We spoke very little in class; I think that we almost never did so in English. We worked on bilingual vocabulary lists and many written questions and answers. [...] Activities were mostly written and of the same type. [...] Classes differed a lot from the idea we have today of an EFL class. Neither speaking nor listening comprehension was developed, and reading was simply the context where language took place **(AA, p. 1; my translation)**

She also remembers that the teacher did not speak much English and that she taught classes basically in Spanish. She sat at a table and taught her class from there, without ever standing up, which Sophia thinks is completely different from the notion of class dynamics that we have nowadays **(I1, p. 4)**.

Sophia claims that she learned very little in private classes **(I1, p. 1)**. Not surprisingly, she thinks that her L2 learning experiences in these classes have not had an impact on her own teaching practices **(AA, pp. 1-2)**. Though she enjoyed the idea of learning a FL, she experienced the frustration of not being able to use it to communicate with her cousins, which was apparently her main motivation. The ELT aspects she values today (e.g., exposure to L2, development of oral skills, a focus on meaning in relevant context, and discovery learning) were never present in these practices, nor were the characteristics she now thinks an EFL teacher should have (e.g., an authentic use of L2). These were features which she came to develop in subsequent PLLEs. Sophia’s private classes may well have influenced her current beliefs and practices in terms of what she rejects (see next section).

### 6.2.2 Secondary school in Canada (11-13)

Sophia's next PLLEs took place in Canada, where she immigrated with her family and stayed for about two years. During the first year she attended a class called 'New Canadians' for overseas children whose English was not good enough to go to a regular school. In these classes she was exposed to a completely new type of language teaching methodology, as she describes in this extract:

It's like they continued teaching the different topics [as if you understood English]. I think it's their type of methodology: the teacher went on talking about the topic, say science, history, or hygiene, using a simpler language than the one used in regular classes. But she never taught the language per se. [...] It's what they always call ... or I think they always have a strong idea about immersion. [...] [Classes] were all in English, all in English. And the one that ... the word is not survived, but the student who had better chances to learn the language and move on was the one who took more opportunities to listen to English at home or on television, or liked it and managed to go on because he/she was good at, say, science or history and sort of kept updated. So, when they saw that you responded from the point of view of content, you were promoted to a regular class (**I1, p. 6; my translation**)

Sophia also says that she has good memories of her experience in the 'New Canadians' class and adds that she saw everything colourful and picturesque (**I1, pp. 6-7**). Sophia's positive experience in these classes may have contributed to the values and beliefs about FL teaching she then built. As was described in 6.1.1, she manifests an interest in an 'immersion' type of methodology with lots of exposure to L2 and classes which are more content and skills-based than language-focused.

In the second year Sophia attended regular classes at a Catholic, single-sex secondary school. She felt she had to adapt to the new school and to learn how to relate to the other girls. Classes were now more demanding. She had problems particularly with English literature since she had not yet developed good writing skills. Sophia regularly failed this class but she did not feel bad since she did well in other subjects like history, chemistry, and mathematics. She remembers how good her teachers were, especially her French teacher:

I thought they were good because ... you know what?, in what sense they were good?, they were committed. They were committed; they *taught* their classes. At that time there was not much knowledge about students' participation, but they were not the type of teachers who sat at their desks and did nothing. [...] Of all my teachers in Canada, I remember my French teacher perfectly well: a French-looking lady with short dark hair and light blue eyes. She brought drawings to class, put them up and described them in detail. I think she used the Direct Method. She was incredible, wonderful (I1, pp. 9-10; my translation)

Unlike her first private teacher, who sat at her desk all the time, Canadian teachers showed Sophia a different type of class dynamics. She values their commitment, a feature which she precisely identifies as one of her strengths (I1, p. 11). The extract also shows that she enjoyed her French teacher's approach, possibly because it involved plenty of exposure to L2, which Sophia has overtly stated she appreciates (see 6.1.1). Sophia clearly recalls images of particular people in her PLLEs and associates them with stereotyped notions of good teaching (Canadian teachers being committed and *teaching* their classes) and bad teaching (private teacher sitting at her desk all the time). She has probably reinforced her positive images of her Canadian teachers because they bear some resemblance to her own personality traits (e.g., committed) (see Calderhead and Robson, 1991: 4). Like the four trainees in Johnson (1994), Sophia holds strong images not only of her L2 educators but also of classroom dynamics and specific instructional activities, possibly because these coincide with her positive perception of herself as an L2 teacher and of her own teaching practices. To sum up, content/skills-based teaching, immersion, exposure to L2, and commitment are notions which Sophia experienced in Canada and which form part of her current FL teaching beliefs.

### 6.2.3 Secondary school in Argentina (13-17)

Upon arrival in Argentina from Canada, Sophia started secondary school, where she took three years of EFL classes and two years of French. She never studied EFL at a private language school. She did well in her EFL classes and even helped her classmates because, having lived in an English-speaking country, she could speak some English. She remembers she had very good FL teachers:

[My EFL teachers] were good, in the sense that they had a good command of the language. I had two [EFL] teachers who then became my tutors at university. [...] They both had a good level of English [...] and methodologically speaking [...] classes were ... they had a good pace; I never got bored, I liked them. [...] My French class was great. [We used] a very old book, which I still have; wonderful. I was good at French. I liked it, I like it. Besides, I am good at imitating sounds so I used to do that. [...] [All these teachers] were very active [...] sort of histrionic **(I1, pp. 8-9; my translation)**

Sophia seems to have had positive FL experiences at secondary school. In this extract she appears to appreciate three teaching traits in particular: teachers' fluent command of L2 (see 6.1.1), good class dynamics, and active personality. Once more, Sophia recalls vivid images of her L2 educators and their teaching actions which are closely related to her own strengths as an EFL teacher (see Calderhead and Robson, 1991; Johnson, 1994). This passage also provides evidence of her innate oral skills, in this case, her ability to imitate sounds.

#### **6.2.4 Teacher training course at university**

At the TTC Sophia took classes in Language, English Grammar, and Methodology, among other subjects. In Language classes she did not do well and usually got low marks as she was not very methodical and never seemed to do what her tutors expected her to do (e.g., read a short story, look up words in the dictionary, and then create vocabulary lists) **(I1, p. 12)**. This was possibly due to the fact that, unlike her classmates, she had not learnt English formally at a language school but in a natural way without a focus on language:

I saw that my partners made vocabulary lists and I didn't. If there was something to read, I read it but, though there were words that I didn't know, it never occurred to me that I had to use the dictionary. [...] We worked on short stories. We did some reading and there was some vocabulary work. We analysed the vocabulary in the stories. Sometimes we had to choose what words to focus on but I never made the right decision. [...] My classmates did well, however. They had some background knowledge that they had developed at language schools which allowed them to cope with work in Language classes. Perhaps university tutors were very much in contact with EFL schools **(ibid.; my translation)**.

As opposed to her classmates, Sophia had learned English informally while living and studying secondary school in an English-speaking context (see 6.2.2). This is why, it “never occurred” to her to consult a dictionary to help her understand a story and learn L2. Though Sophia felt she was at a disadvantage compared with her fellow students, she never got frustrated.

Her informal PLLEs abroad were also going to have an impact on her grammar learning at the TTC, where she studied English grammar for two years and Spanish grammar for one year. The prescriptive nature of the approach used in English Grammar classes was naturally in direct conflict with the L2 learning beliefs which Sophia had built thus far, as is reflected in this passage from her diary:

At the teacher training course grammar teaching was centred on the study of rules directly from books which were very prescriptive. I didn't trust these books, maybe because I had lived in an English-speaking country for two years and I felt that these books didn't describe the language I had been exposed to from native speakers. I intended to study grammar in the same way I had studied history, geography or a poem. I never thought that studying grammar could have an impact on my production  
(TD, pp. 1-2; my translation)

This extract illustrates the clash both between the natural approach to language teaching which Sophia was exposed to abroad and the prescriptive methodology of her grammar classes at university, and between the more genuine L2 use she witnessed in Canada and the rigid and rule-governed L2 use fostered by her grammar tutors and books. The passage also shows that Sophia did not see the benefit which studying grammar could bring to her language use. This experience and position can be further observed in her description of her first year English Grammar lessons during the first interview: “unfortunately, the grammar I studied was traditional, prescriptive, that is, ‘these are the verbs, the verbs are these, these are the tenses, we use the tenses for this, this, and that’. No sophistication, unfortunately, there was no sophistication in the study of grammar” (I1, p. 13; my translation). Second year classes, which Sophia found “a bit more interesting”, involved syntax analysis (I1, p. 14). Because of her informal L2 learning background, she was not familiar with grammatical terminology and found it difficult to assign a name to the language she knew (I1, pp. 13-14). English Grammar classes seemed not to have helped her much to

build a good knowledge base of grammar names since she realised, when she started working, that her colleagues made a much better use of grammatical terminology than she did (*ibid.*). This experience at work probably reinforced her idea that her English Grammar lessons at university had not contributed much to her development as an EFL teacher or as an L2 user. Sophia claims that Spanish Grammar classes, on the other hand, were “a bit more modern” as they centred on aspects related to discourse (*I1, p. 14*). Her language learning experiences in her grammar classes at the TTC most probably influenced her current tendency to avoid or defer grammar-related discussions and her preference for discourse-based grammar instruction in place of the study of individual grammatical points.

As regards her Methodology classes, Sophia lived the transition from the audio-lingual method to a communicative approach to FL teaching. The teaching of grammar was one of the most significant changes in this transition:

As a result of this transition, the role of grammar entered ‘a stage of uncertainty’ [‘un cono de sombra’]: nobody knew what to do with grammar. Everything was based on functions, context and ‘meaning’; the formal aspects of language were dealt with peripherally, ‘only when necessary’, which was not very precise either. Despite this absence [of grammar], I believe that all this experience has had an impact on my current practices. I had to decide what to do myself with grammar, for I had not been trained on this in my teaching practices (*AA, p. 2; my translation*)

This training on communicative language teaching no doubt shaped the nature of Sophia’s current L2 teaching beliefs and principles. Her classes precisely include a focus on ‘functions, context, and meaning’, as she was trained to do, and grammar is often pushed into the background and treated mostly ‘peripherally’. She argues, however, that she is reconsidering the role of grammar in her teaching practices and that she is developing a more natural relationship with it (*I2, pp. 5-6*).

### 6.2.5 First teaching practices

Sophia remembers that her first teaching practices coincided with the boom of the communicative approach in Argentina in the late 1970s (*I1, p. 15*). The focus was on functions and grammar was neglected completely: “the word grammar became a bad word. [...] So I washed my hands of grammar. Besides, I

taught children, I taught children for almost ten years, so I took no notice of grammar at all. [...] Nothing about grammar. Grammar wasn't present in the way we worked. And we got used to it" (**ibid.**, **my translation**). She first started teaching grammar when she was required to do so at a local language school. EFL teaching was book-based at this school and the more advanced the level to teach, the more grammar items these books included (**ibid.**). She thus learned to teach grammar through experience: when a grammar explanation worked, she replicated it in subsequent classes (**I1, p. 16**). In this way Sophia "developed [her] own conception of grammar and what it involves on the basis of what [she] read about it and of [her] own experience" (**ibid.**, **my translation**). Her explicit KAG and GRPK are, therefore, experiential, i.e. defined by her own classroom experience teaching grammar. Sophia built what Johnston and Goettsch call "a database of knowledge" which she can resort to when teaching grammar (2000: 447). Undoubtedly, Sophia's first teaching practices reinforced her beliefs about a communicative, meaning-oriented and non-language-focused EFL methodology which she had built during her PLLEs in Canada and at the TTC.

#### 6.2.6 Summary

Sophia has had both formal and informal PLLEs, the latter strongly defining her L2 learning beliefs and directly influencing her subsequent language learning experiences and language teaching practices. Her formal and informal PLLEs in Canada instilled in her the notions of immersion, exposure to L2, content/skills-based (as opposed to language-focused) teaching, and commitment. Her formal PLLEs in Argentina (secondary school and methodology classes at TTC) reinforced and enriched these notions. Some other experiences (language and grammar classes at TTC), on the other hand, came into conflict with her pre-training beliefs and appear, to Sophia, not to have added much to her language and professional development. Finally, her first teaching experiences represented further language learning experiences. Her very first practices were in line with her meaning-oriented and grammar-free teaching principles, but later positions required that Sophia redefine the role of grammar in language teaching and that she enhance her explicit KAG and GRPK, which she gained through classroom experience. Sophia's current L2 teaching practices and rationale mirror many of the aspects she was exposed to in her PLLEs and suggest that she is still seeking to understand the role which grammar should

play in FL teaching. See Appendix 11 to read a summary table of Sophia's PLLEs and the impact these may have had on her current teaching practices.

### 6.3 KAG

#### 6.3.1 Manifestations of KAG

Despite Sophia's limited engagement with grammar in her classes, manifestations of both explicit and implicit KAG were identified in the grammar teaching episodes observed, the answers she provided in the SR sessions, and her response to the GJT. The most definite indication of her KAG is found in her accurate use of L2. Further evidence is present in her adequate grammar explanations, the precise elicitation of grammar-related information, the appropriate use of grammatical content in examples, and in her accurate correction of learners' grammar mistakes.

#### A. Explicit KAG

Evidence of Sophia's explicit KAG can be found in her elicitation, explanation, exemplification, and/or definition of the following grammar points: use of definite article; past simple vs. present simple tenses; connectors; semantic categories of linking words; use of 'on the one hand' and 'on the other hand'; use of 'despite'; use of 'for example' in relation to punctuation; relationship between register and grammar (e.g., 'could' vs. 'can' for requests); semantic functions of word categories (e.g., 'modal verbs' for speculating); meaning and use of reported speech; changes in tenses in reported statements; and reporting verbs. These examples show her knowledge of and interest in grammatical items at and above the sentence level.

Additionally, there are manifestations of Sophia's explicit KAG in her response to the GJT. 44.26% of the explanations she provided were correct. She was able to correct and explain the mistakes of the following grammatical points: *to* infinitive verb in the verb pattern 'seem to + verb' (2 cases); verb conjugated in past simple tense (1); past simple tense to describe concurrent events in the past (1); adverbial particle 'away' as part of a multi-verb to express the idea of 'removing' (1); past continuous tense in active voice (1); past simple tense in active voice (1); 'for' to introduce a prepositional phrase expressing period of time (2); coordinating conjunction 'and' to express addition (2); past perfect tense to indicate a previous action in the past (1); the use of the determiner 'another' (1);



irregular plural noun (1); double subject (1); singular noun (1); multi-part verb (1); modal verb 'would' to express idea of an imaginary situation (1); *to* infinitive verb to express purpose (2); misuse of definite article (2); present simple tense to describe a characteristic that is true in the present period of time + syntax (1); comparative clause (1); regular plural noun (1); present simple to refer to a state existing in the present (1); and modal verb 'could' after 'wish' to express regret (1). The gap between Sophia's performance in 'error correction' (86.30%) and that in 'error explanation' (44.26%) adds to the findings reported in Emma's case, Andrews (1999a), and Andrews and McNeill (2005), though the difference between Sophia's performances is larger than that observed in Emma's (75%-54.5%) but not as dramatic as those found in Andrews (1999a) and Andrews and McNeill (2005) (see 3.3.3).

## B. Implicit KAG

Only one case of implicit KAG could be identified in the classes observed and the SR sessions. Sophia was eliciting the correct answer to fill in the following gap: *Every year thousands of students take important exams which can decide their future. .... , students have to pass exams with satisfactory grades in order to get a place in a university.* The students suggested both 'such as' and 'for example', to which Sophia responded:

... the meaning is the same but listen to me: 'for example', 'for example' is better, more appropriate for a front position at the beginning of the sentence. So, 'for example' mm? at the beginning of the sen/ maybe it's not clear that there is a stop there? (SR4, E3)

Sophia was sure that 'for example' was the right choice, but was unable to provide an explanation which made the difference between 'such as' and 'for example' clearer. In the SR interview, she attempted to explain the distinction between these linking words without success:

**S:** ... when you say 'for example' you ... I don't know, you are providing an example of something that has been mentioned before, like an example which may go ... I don't know, which is something like sort of more, more global, whereas 'such as' you usually give examples of a more specific nature in reference to what has been

mentioned before. Because for example in the text it says “an illness”, I don’t know, situations in which you’re nervous or you fail.

**I:** [reading the text] “there may be other reasons, such as illness ...”. That was the example in the text.

**S:** Claro [Of course]. For example, it is a more specific example in reference to ... in reference to ... other reasons: “such as illness”, whereas in the other case the ‘for example’ was introducing a complete different example, that is, an example from the previous sentence, no? (*ibid.*)

Sophia appears to know the meaning of and how to use ‘such as’ and ‘for example’ accurately but is unable to verbalise the rule(s) which might help the students understand their use. Sophia, therefore, could be said to have implicit knowledge of the use of these items.

With respect to the GJT, it is not possible to assert confidently that there exist manifestations of implicit knowledge. First, it could be argued that in those cases where Sophia identified and corrected a mistake but provided no or incomplete explanations (47.54% of the cases) there is some evidence of implicit knowledge of the grammatical item concerned. However, this is not necessarily true. There is also the possibility that she may have forgotten to give an explanation or that the nature of her explanations may be shaped by other factors (e.g., tiredness, anxiety, time constraints, and distracting contextual elements) than simply her knowledge of the grammatical content involved. In other words, her application of KAG may have been influenced by attitudinal, situational, or contextual factors (see Andrews, 2007: 41, 46). Second, the five instances in which Sophia corrected the mistake but offered a wrong explanation could be better regarded as manifestations of implicit knowledge. Yet the aforementioned factors may have well influenced the nature of her response. In conclusion, in view of the fact that all the evidence of implicit KAG in the GJT is refutable, a follow up interview with the teacher after the correction would have been needed to support such evidence.

### 6.3.2 Fuzzy areas in Sophia’s KAG

#### A. Observations and stimulated recall sessions

A few peculiarities about Sophia’s KAG were noticed in the classes observed and the SR interviews. One of the instances took place in relation to a

passage she used to introduce linking words. She mistyped the text, which she took from the textbook materials, creating a mistake (a *fragment*) in the introduction:

A lot of people in England think that if we didn't have private schools we would have better state schools. *Although these people usually don't say how you can stop private schools from opening.*

During the SR session she was asked to read and give her opinion about the whole text. Sophia criticised the excessive number of connectors in a short piece of text but made no comments about the mistake. When she was told that the passage contained a mistake in the introduction, she responded:

I didn't pay attention to that. I thought only about the connectors and if they somehow expressed or would appear as far as the idea they wanted to convey. It would be, it should be, it *should* be correct, it should be correct. But I'm not perhaps I'm not that ... I don't know how to call it, I didn't pay attention to that. I didn't pay attention to those, to those ... I don't I don't even know if I could find them **(SR3)**

This extract reveals Sophia's meaning-oriented approach to the text, her heavy reliance on textbooks and acceptance of whatever input they provide, and her lack of confidence in her KAG (see 6.3.4). After reading the introduction twice, Sophia stated that she could yet not see the mistake and asked me to explain it to her. She then understood the nature of the mistake immediately. This instance shows that more than a single factor may explain why a teacher is unwilling or unable to filter the content of published materials (see Andrews, 1999b; 2007).

The second peculiarity was observed in the next class when Sophia was eliciting the right connector (*'However'*) from a list of options the learners had to choose from to complete the following gap:

Every year thousands of students take important exams which can decide their future. For example, students have to pass exams with satisfactory grades in order to get a place in a university. .... , are exams a fair way of judging a student's ability?

Apart from *'However'*, the students suggested *'But'*, which appears to be semantically appropriate but grammatically incorrect because of the comma

separating '*But*' from the main clause. Surprised by the learners' unexpected suggestion, Sophia hesitantly accepted their answer as correct:

**I:** You sounded hesitant when you accepted the students' suggestion '*but*'. Is my impression correct? [...]

**S:** I'm trying to remember ... I agree with you. I agree [she laughs]. I agree with you.

**I:** Why do you think ...

**S:** Because I tend to doubt, always. [...] in relation to grammar, I tend to doubt. So probably I sounded hesitant.

**I:** You didn't know whether '*but*' was correct or not

**S:** No, no, in my in my ... I thought that '*but*' was correct, but I do not tend to trust myself. But I thought that it was correct. [unintelligible] When I have to say something to the students I tend to be ...it happens many times that I think that something *might* be correct. Obviously in more complex things but I usually I usually don't rely myself too much on that.

**I:** [...] Were you doubtful at the level of meaning or at the level of use?

**S:** No, at the level of meaning I didn't doubt. Maybe I wasn't so sure at the level of use.

**I:** OK. And in your opinion, is it possible to use '*but*' in the sentence under discussion?

**S:** Yes, I think it is possible. If you ask *me*, in spite of all my doubts, I would say it is.

**I:** OK, OK. What would you say are the differences between '*but*' and '*however*' grammatically speaking?

**S:** I have no idea. [she laughs] Yo no tengo idea cuales son las ... no me preguntes porque no lo se [I have no idea what are the ... don't ask me because I don't know]

**(SR4, E4)**

No doubt, Sophia's focus is constantly on meaning rather than on grammar use, which might explain why she thinks both options ('*However*' and '*But*') are interchangeable and why she cannot tell the grammatical difference between them. The extract also provides evidence about Sophia's lack of confidence in her KAG. This is probably the reason why she assesses the appropriateness of structures from the point of view of meaning and not of grammar. Considering that she consistently used English in all the SR sessions, her switching into Spanish and laughing at the end of the extract might indicate how uneasy she feels when she is involved in a grammar discussion (see 6.3.4). As in the previous case, several factors (e.g., focus on meaning, lack of confidence in

KAG, and lack of KAG) may account for the teacher's lack of mediation of learner output in class (see Andrews, 1999b; 2007).

Two further peculiarities were identified in Sophia's classes. In these instances, she was observed not to 'filter' her own output (possibly as a result of limitations of her KAG), thus conveying notions that were conceptually inaccurate (see Andrews, 1999b; 2007). First, she introduced 'direct' speech ("He said: 'I need you'") and 'indirect' speech ("He said that he needed me") as two types of reported speech (**SR9, E3**). Sophia's misconception persisted in the SR interview, as is reflected in this extract:

I thought that in fact, in Spanish, in Spanish and in English, we have these two types of reported speech. And I thought that it was useful to say that the only type of reported speech is not the one that we have to ... the one that we use when we make changes, that we can also report in another way. And that that possibility is available. OK? But that was not our focus, it was the other one (**ibid.**)

Second, while discussing the difference in use between 'tell' and 'say' as reporting verbs, Sophia conveyed an inaccurate conception about the nature of indirect objects:

**St2:** She told me that she would always love me.

**T:** OK. Very good. Good. Can I use this indirect object with 'say'? She said me? No, with 'say' I cannot use the indirect object. Can I say 'she said to me'?

**St2:** No.

**T:** She said to me that she was coming. Yes. 'She said' with 'to' I can use it. But not with indirect object here. OK? Good (**SR10, E1**)

Sophia appears to conceive of an indirect object as formed only by an object pronoun but not by the combination of the preposition *to* + object pronoun. Her misunderstanding remained in the SR interview until she asked me to indicate the indirect object in the two examples discussed in class. She immediately explained the reason for her confusion:

Maybe I was confused and I thought of the indirect object only in terms of the object pronoun placed there. [...] I confused the ... shall we say, the form with the function in the sentence (**ibid.**)

Despite Sophia's conceptual confusion, she seems to understand the nature and logic of grammar easily. The last sentence also indicates that she is aware of the notions of form (i.e. category) and function within a sentence.

### **B. Grammaticality judgement task**

The analysis of Sophia's response to the GJT also revealed some fuzzy areas about her KAG. Evidence of this might be: the mistakes not identified, the unnecessary corrections, the wrong corrections, and the wrong explanations provided.

First, the mistakes which Sophia did not identify are related to the following grammatical points: plural noun (1 case), a complementizer introducing a nominal relative clause ('whatever') (2), past simple tense (past simple vs. past continuous) (1), *to* infinitive verb ('to have the necessity *to do* something') (1), preposition (1), past simple (third person singular) - subject-verb concord (1), possessive genitive (1), genitive case of attribute (1), and concord between post modifier and antecedent (1). Second, she made one correction where there was no mistake: she added an unnecessary coordinating conjunction. Third, she made a correction which changed the meaning of the statement: replaced 'influenced by his behaviour' with 'influenced my behaviour' in the sentence 'my uncle is the only person who influenced by his behaviour'. Finally, she provided wrong explanations to five of the mistakes she corrected: assigned the past perfect tense a use which relates it to the present time ("action that started in the past and comes to the *present*"); claimed that three of the *to* infinitive verbs she corrected expressed the idea of purpose, when in fact they were all part of fixed expressions (to have the need or necessity *to do* something; beg someone *to do* something); and confused the use of present perfect in "My uncle is the only person who *has influenced* me" saying that it refers to 'an action that started in the past and comes to present' when it refers to 'a past action which has a result or effect in the present time'.

These fuzzy areas do not necessarily indicate that Sophia has limitations in her knowledge of these grammatical items. They do reveal, however, some shortcomings in the teacher's behaviour which might be caused by one or a combination of factors such as the huge number of mistakes in the passages, the ambiguities in the meaning intended by the writer, the teacher's personal circumstances like time constraints and tiredness, the pressure placed by the test

itself, and, naturally, some deviation in her KAG. In other words, her application of KAG may have been influenced by professional, attitudinal, situational, or contextual factors (see Andrews, 2007: 41, 46).

### 6.3.3 Grammatical terminology

Manifestations of Sophia's knowledge of grammatical terminology are found mostly in her response to the GJT. She made use of grammar terms when naming the mistakes and sometimes when explaining them. The grammatical labels she used were: verbs (*to* infinitive, bare infinitive, multi-part verbs, third person singular, conjugated), nouns (singular and plural), adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, articles, tenses (present simple, past simple, past perfect, present perfect), voice (active), sentence, and word order. Further manifestations are present in her classes, where she sometimes employed grammatical terms when explaining, discussing, or eliciting grammar items such as the use of linking words, the use of gerunds and *to* infinitive verbs, the use of adjectives and modal verbs in opinions, the changes involved when reporting statements (tenses and pronouns), and the different types of reporting verbs. Finally, in the SR sessions, Sophia used grammatical terminology very sporadically when she provided the rationale for her actions (e.g., infinitive and gerunds; adjectives in opinions) and when she defined 'connector'.

The observation of classes and the SR interviews revealed, however, that Sophia has a tendency to omit specific grammatical terms. First, she provided explanations or discussed grammar points in class without using any grammatical labels. Such was the case when she explained the distinction between 'on the one hand', 'on the other hand', 'despite', 'although' and 'however'; and between 'for example' and 'such as' (**SR4, E3-4**). Another example is when she explained the inaccurate nature of 'I'm not agree', possibly because of her preference for dealing with whole chunks (**SR2, E3**). Second, on one occasion she introduced the correct grammatical name and then simplified it into a misleading term. When discussing the changes in pronouns in reported statements, Sophia used 'personal pronouns' and then wrote 'persons' on the blackboard (**SR9, E7**). Third, Sophia labelled some grammatical items with an inaccurate generic term. For instance, she used 'connector' to refer to a group of linking words comprising adverbial links, subordinate conjunctions, coordinate conjunctions, and prepositions (**SR3, E1-4**). Finally, during SR, she repeatedly used generic terms

instead of specific grammar names. The most common ones are: formal aspects about language, aspects about the system, structures, elements, and chunks. She also misused ‘possessive pronoun’ to refer to ‘their’ instead of using ‘possessive adjective’ (**SR1, E1-7**).

In Sophia’s answers to the GJT, where she was required to name the grammatical item in each correction, there were 20 instances out of 65 mistakes she corrected in which she did not provide any grammatical terminology (30.8% of the times). It is hard to claim that this fact shows lack of knowledge of grammatical terms since, as was explained above in relation to the manifestations of implicit knowledge, her responses might be influenced by other factors than merely her KAG. Furthermore, 60% of the grammatical points she did not name in the task were used by Sophia on other occasions in class, in the SR sessions, or in the GJT. Nonetheless, the grammar items she did not mention in the task are: *to* infinitive verb (4 times), preposition (4), past perfect (1), present simple (2), determiner (1), past participle (1), pronoun (2), degree complement structure ‘as + adjective + as (+ clause)’ (1), degree adverb (1), complex sentence with adverbial clause of time (1), modal verb (1), and prepositional phrase (part of subject) and clause predicate (1).

#### 6.3.4 Lack of confidence in KAG

The data reveal several manifestations of Sophia’s lack of confidence in her KAG. One graphic example is her heavy reliance on textbooks. As was mentioned in 6.3.2, she expects textbook materials to be flawless (“it *should* be correct, it should be correct”, **SR3**) and, therefore, tends to trust them blindly:

I tend to think that if there is a mistake it is maybe on my part, not on their part. That’s what I usually tend to think. So I have to trust them, but since I always think that maybe I’m the one who makes mistakes, so I usually tend to trust them (**ibid.**)

This resembles the case of Rose, a secondary school teacher in Hong Kong who did not ‘filter’ the content of published materials and uncritically accepted everything that the materials said (Andrews, 1999b). On another occasion Sophia was eliciting the semantic categories of a group of linking words. The learners suggested ‘adding ideas’ and, though she acknowledged this category as correct, she wrote ‘listing ideas’ on the board, the label used in the textbook. When asked about this episode, Sophia replied:



Maybe I wanted to go by the terminology in the book, I wanted to keep by the terminology in the book. But I didn't think ... because, in fact, I try to use 'list' and sometimes it comes out and I want to say 'add' instead of 'list'. OK? But I wanted to keep to the terminology in the book. I have the feeling sometimes that maybe the books have been able to choose a better, the textbook writer, a better term or a term that more precisely indicates the idea, although 'adding' would've been perfectly all right **(SR4, E2)**

Though Sophia would possibly use 'adding' and 'listing' interchangeably depending on what emerges at that moment, she trusts the textbook writer's ideas more than her own and, therefore, prefers to stick to the terminology used in printed materials. She argues that she tends to rely on the textbook more "when it comes to grammar, or when it comes to aspects of the system" and, in relation to grammatical functions in particular, she states:

These questions of the semantic categories always make me doubt, *a/ways* make me doubt, always. Because I'm not exactly sure and I only have ... you always have ... you always have ... the only reference sometimes you have for certain things is what the book says **(ibid.)**.

Sophia disclosed her lack of confidence in her KAG on several other occasions during the study. In her diary she wrote: "grammar is not my element [and] represents a challenge in all my classes" **(TD, p. 2)**. In relation to the comparison of structures in L1 and L2, she said: "I am not the best person to do it because of all the inconvenience that I have ..." **(SR2, E2-3)**. This may help explain why Sophia used this technique only occasionally and may serve as an example of how her self-perception of her KAG shapes the application of her GRPK. Finally, when asked if her explanation had helped the students to understand the distinction between 'such as' and 'for example', Sophia replied: "Well, because you wrote this question I tend to think, I tend to think that it's not very appropriate" **(SR4, E3)**.

The discussion about my research project in the final interview also revealed some lack of confidence, in this case when Sophia corrects grammar:

[The project] was nice. It was very, very interesting. I liked it very much. I liked ... very much / I didn't like very much the correction part, which I always suffer through the correction. [...] I'm not very comfortable with it. I always doubt about what I correct. I don't know, I'm not ... it's very difficult for me to tell somebody that something is that way. I mean, it's a question of personality or with grammar it seems that it's a more ... at least from the point of view in which we deal with it since we're language teachers we're supposed to give the students an answer as regards grammar, tell them that grammar goes one way or grammar goes the other way. Because if it is to become an instrument for the learner to use it, then maybe the learner wants some kind, or that's maybe what I feel or that's the way I view it, sort of wanting one definite answer as regards grammar. Can we use it or not? Is it correct or not? I mean, how many ways of writing this are there? Is it this way, that way, and that way and not more. And I'm not always sure about that. Because I don't know ... maybe, when people talk, they say something different. So I'm not sort of very comfortable with the grammar correction **(I2, pp. 1-2)**

Sophia's lack of confidence when correcting grammar might be derived from her belief that, as a teacher, she is supposed to give learners categorical answers and from her manifest 'inability' or unwillingness to do so. She is also concerned that she might end up correcting some language which is perfectly appropriate in spoken discourse. This was also observed in Miquel, another experienced secondary school teacher with a similar self-perception of his KAG. He introduced his corrections of students' written mistakes in a tentative way ("It would be better to write ...") as a cover-up (Pahissa and Tragant, 2009: 55). In Sophia's case, her belief and concern could be associated with her PLLEs in her grammar classes at the TTC: the image of the prescriptive teacher providing either-or responses and the dichotomy between the language fostered in the classroom and that used in real life. In any case, Sophia claims she feels doubtful and uncomfortable when correcting grammar.

### 6.3.5 Summary

The exploration of Sophia's KAG revealed manifestations of both explicit and implicit knowledge of the grammar content dealt with in class and those included in the GJT. In-class manifestations were evident mostly in the elicitation and discussions of grammar items rather than in her formal explanations. In the GJT almost 97% (63 out of 65) of the corrections which Sophia made were correct but it could be proved only in 44.26% of the cases (where she provided

correct explanations) that she possessed explicit knowledge of the grammar points concerned. This evidence along with her inclination to defer or avoid explanations might indicate that Sophia has a solid KAG but encounters some difficulty in verbalising rules and uses. The findings also show some fuzzy areas in her KAG, more specifically in her awareness of the use and categorisation of linking words, the nature of reported speech, and the form of indirect objects. Some peculiarities were also noticed in the GJT, mostly in her understanding of what certain grammar items express (e.g., present and past perfect and to infinitive verbs). In addition, the study of Sophia's KAG provides evidence of her knowledge of grammatical terminology, though she was observed during class and SR sessions to omit to use specific grammar labels and to provide generic, sometimes misleading, terms, possibly because of her meaning-oriented, rather than language-focused, approach to language teaching. Finally, there is strong evidence concerning Sophia's lack of confidence in her KAG, mostly manifested in her heavy reliance on textbook materials, in the challenge she claims that grammar teaching always represents, and in her feelings of uncertainty and uneasiness when she corrects grammar. This lack of confidence often explains the aforesaid peculiarities in her KAG and her restricted use of specific grammatical terms. See Appendix 12 to read a summary table of Sophia's KAG.

## 6.4 GRPK

### 6.4.1 Explanations

This section involves one important aspect of the *instruction* process of Shulman et al.'s model of pedagogical reasoning and action: explanations (see Shulman, 1987). As described above, Sophia has a tendency to defer or avoid formal grammar explanations and, instead, she engages in the elicitation or discussion of grammatical items. There were three episodes in her classes in which she provided the rationale for either giving some explanation or avoiding it altogether.

The first episode has already been mentioned in 6.1.2 and has to do with her decision not to point out the ungrammaticality in the statement 'I'm not agree'. Sophia first attempted to avoid the explanation. Her main argument for doing this was that she preferred to treat language as 'chunks' and not as discrete grammatical elements: "when I am trying to focus on the use of certain

functions I'd rather treat them as chunks and maybe not as individual elements" (SR2, E1). She also argued that she did not think that, in this case, an explanation would have any impact on the learners' production: "I'm not very sure whether an explanation of the mistake would help them overcome the problem that they have" (*ibid.*). Moreover, she thought that, by not providing a grammar explanation, she was giving them "a break from grammar" and an opportunity to "approach the language [...] from another perspective" (*ibid.*). She then stated that the 'break' was probably for her: "maybe it's a break for me or I feel more comfortable when I'm sort of working with this kind of chunk than when I'm working, right, because they have less things to worry about" (*ibid.*). This extract reveals her preference for a more meaning-centred treatment of language and her interest in simplifying the learning process to the students. Finally, Sophia reinforced her argument for focusing on meaning rather than on grammar:

I do enjoy though perhaps like this kind of ... of dialogue. I mean, maybe, maybe this kind of interaction may may also bring about/ that is after all, here, we are talking about language, OK from the point of view of functions, not from the point of view of grammar, from the point of view of functions but we're talking in a meaningful way, because this dialogue *is* meaningful. So I think that that might serve as a kind of ... exposure or input that is meaningful and that is perhaps more valid than any other one that might turn up in the classroom. So what I think is good is that ... we are communicating, OK about the language but we are communicating (*ibid.*)

This argument is consistent with two key objectives in her approach to language learning: promoting meaningful communication and maximising genuine exposure to L2. In the end, considering that the learners kept on repeating 'I'm not agree', Sophia decided to provide a short explanation in L1, focusing on the negative transfer which they were possibly making from Spanish (see 6.4.2 C).

The second episode occurred when the students were completing an open cloze with linking words and could not tell the distinction between those expressing contrast (e.g., 'however' vs. 'although'). Sophia's decision was to provide a partial or no explanation of them. She claimed that a more comprehensive explanation was time-consuming and, as in the previous case, not useful to the students: "Well, maybe I didn't finish the explanation because [...] I thought that for every aspect it was going to take very long [...]. I sometimes sort of think that [...] they wouldn't in fact benefit from some more

examples or trying out to use them for further explanations on my part” (SR4, E4). She then added that sometimes she does not know how much grammar information to provide in explanations (*ibid.*). Sophia’s decision to give partial or no grammar explanations seems to be influenced by two factors: the long time which she thinks they take, which is a high inconvenience given the time constraints she is subject to at Cortázar School (see 6.5.1), and her belief that grammar explanations are not conducive to a better understanding of L2 or to improving the learners’ L2 production.

The third episode took place when Sophia was eliciting the names of tenses and a student repeatedly suggested that ‘was going to stop’ was an instance of past continuous. Sophia’s first reaction was to provide the correct name herself (the past of ‘going to’). As the student’s confusion persisted, she described the form involved in each tense: “past continuous is ‘was’ and the verb in -ing. But this is ‘was going to and the infinitive’. It’s past of ‘going to” (SR9). Finally, she attempted to clarify the point by giving examples and eliciting the names of the tenses used. This time the student said that ‘I was going to buy a car’ was an example of “past continuous of *going to*”. Sophia ended her explanation repeating the name of the tense under discussion. She claims that the lack of success of her approach was because the type of explanation she provided was not appropriate for this particular learner:

What I use here was a way of explaining that could’ve served or could’ve been appropriate for a student who had incidentally been confused without paying too much attention. I think, and then maybe, this explanation could’ve served its purpose if .. it was just a momentary [...] confusion. But I think that [name of student] has a more serious problem here (SR9, E11)

Sophia states that a more suitable approach would have required making a break and providing more examples, eliciting more information, and analysing the form and use of each of the two tenses in detail (*ibid.*). Sophia then explains why, though she was aware that the student was still confused, she decided to go on with her class:

Maybe I wanted not to lose the other students since they were very few and they were talking a little bit. [...] Of course I could’ve engaged the whole class into the explanation for [name of student]. But ... I don’t know, maybe the characteristics of

the whole group in the sense that they are talkative and that ... I don't know, I didn't want to lose the students ... or I also wanted to move on since [...] I don't have many more classes to go before an exam and so I need to cover the topic (*ibid.*)

The nature of Sophia's explanation was, therefore, highly determined by two important CFs: the fact that her students are talkative and get easily distracted and the little time available to cover the topic (see 6.5.1 and 6.5.2). In addition, Sophia's explanation was shaped by a third CF, the profile of the learner to whom the explanation was addressed:

I also sometimes have the feeling that [...] she wants to get it over because she does not like to be the centre of anything. So maybe, since she doesn't want to be the centre at this moment, everybody is looking at her because she does not know the distinction between the past continuous and the 'was going to' ... maybe she doesn't like that very much. In fact, she very seldom addresses me or the other students in English. I think that she is somewhat conscious [...] that maybe her performance in English is not as good as some of the other students in the group [...]. So I think that she doesn't like to be in the centre. So I think that ... I did cut this thing here and I did not go into any further explanations (*ibid.*)

The nature of Sophia's explanations seems to be shaped by her sense of the whole class and of individual learners as well as of other CFs (e.g., time restrictions) which determine, for instance, how long she can devote to explanations. This third episode discloses the interplay of different knowledge categories: subject-matter (i.e. past of *going to*), pedagogy (i.e. alternative strategies), learners (both individual students and the whole class), and context (e.g., time constraints) (e.g., Andrews, 2007; Hashweh, 2005).

#### 6.4.2 Techniques

Like 5.4.2 above, this section covers the *representation* sub-process within Shulman et al.'s theoretical framework of pedagogical reasoning and action (see Shulman, 1987). The techniques which Sophia uses to represent grammatical concepts and make them accessible to the learners are usually combined in her presentations, comments, corrections, and the discussions she holds with the students. The application of these strategies entails the interaction

of different knowledge categories such as subject-matter, context, learners, curriculum, and pedagogy (see Andrews, 2007; Hashweh, 2005).

### A. Elicitation

As can be seen in Table 11 on pp. 177-178, eliciting information is Sophia's most widely used teaching technique, which she employs for a variety of purposes: to revise and clarify grammar points recently introduced (**SR4, E1**), to help students to make associations (**ibid.**), to capture their attention (**SR6, E2**), to activate their previous knowledge, and to recycle items studied in previous lessons (**SR9, E11**). There is one further use of elicitation in Sophia's classes which could be claimed to enhance learners' understanding of grammar content: guiding students in the process of discovery learning. The following extract from class 3, for instance, shows the teacher leading the learners to discover the functional categories of linking words:

**S:** Let's read the first sentence and you tell me now what kind of ideas they connect. OK? Let's see. 'A lot of people in England' ... let's read together. 'A lot of people in England think that if we didn't have private schools we would have better state schools. Although these people usually don't say how you can stop private schools from opening'. We have 'although'. If we say that it is used to connect ideas, OK?, what kind of idea is 'although' connecting? What kind of relation is it indicating between the two sentences?

**St1:** What people think about better schools that ... people think doing something but it doesn't do anything with that because ... I don't know how to say ...

**S:** So, no, wait a minute. Let's see if I can help you. We have two sentences. The idea in the first sentence and the idea in the second sentence, OK?, how are they related?

**St2:** Opposites

**S:** Opposites, not bad. Opposites. OK. Rather than opposites, do you remember the other word that we use when we refer to connectors? Instead of opposite?

**St3:** Contrast

**S:** Contrasting ideas. OK? Contrast ideas because ... people think they are not good, private schools, but they don't give me any solution as to how/ what we can do not to make private schools open. So it's a contrast. OK? [Sophia writes contrasting ideas on the blackboard] Now, can you read on and see if you can find another example of this? (**SR3, E3**)

Sophia continued eliciting information from the students until all the linking words in the text had been grouped into their respective functional category. Likewise, she used elicitation to help the learners to make associations between 'linking words' and the section where they could be used in an argumentative essay (introduction, pros, cons, and conclusion): "As regards the connectors themselves ... when I elicited I, I don't know, my idea was for them to associate certain connectors with certain parts of the piece of discourse" (**SR4, E1**). More instances of this use of elicitation can be found in class 6, when Sophia assisted learners to find common patterns in verb phrases (verb + gerund; verb + *to* infinitive) (**SR6, E2**), and in class 9, when she helped students to discover the rules of use and form in reported speech (**SR9, E3-7**). Apart from the aforesaid uses of elicitation, this teacher employs this technique to encourage the learners to speak in class and, therefore, to develop their oral skills. The use of elicitation was also observed in Eric, another qualified, experienced teacher who, like Sophia, focused on inductive grammar teaching and the development of oral skills (Borg, 1998a).

### **B. Pair/group work**

Sophia thinks that students can construct the meaning of pieces of discourse and new grammatical items if they discuss and complete some exercises together. For example, they were asked to work on an open cloze where they had to fill in each gap with a linking word taken from a list. As they had been shown in the elicitation stage previous to the task, they had to discuss the meaning and relationship of the pieces of text surrounding the gap and then agree on a suitable linking word:

My idea was to see if they could read the text but thinking about what that part of the text was actually indicating from the point of view of the relationship between the different parts of the text. I mean, I thought that if they could sort of think in pairs or by asking their partners, they could exchange some ideas as to ... if they thought it was an example, if they thought it was a contrast, or that the person was simply exemplifying, then they could choose the connectors that they thought could indicate that relationship (**SR3, E4**).

This task was entirely meaning-oriented and, though the pair/group work technique was effective in terms of achieving Sophia's objectives (i.e. that the



learners be able to identify the meaning and connection between pieces of discourse), the students were unable to complete the gaps successfully as they lacked information about how to use linking words. Hence, they used expressions like ‘such as’ and ‘for example’, and ‘however’, ‘but’, ‘although’, and ‘despite’ interchangeably (see 6.3.1 B and 6.3.2 A) and ended up making mistakes like ‘Such as, students have to pass exams with satisfactory grades in order to get a place in a university’ and ‘Although, are exams a fair way of judging a student’s ability?’. It seems that Sophia’s exclusive focus on meaning was not enough to help the learners complete the task. Considering that some of the instances of fuzzy areas (6.3.2), lack of confidence (6.3.4), and lack of explicit KAG (6.3.1 B) described above involve her understanding of the grammatical nature of linking words, one could arguably presume that Sophia intentionally avoided grammar work in relation to these items, which eventually had a negative impact on learners’ task completion.

### C. L1-L2 comparison

Convinced of the necessity to expose the learners to L2 in the classroom, Sophia uses English most of the time and resorts to the students’ L1 on rare occasions (see 6.3.4). However, there were two instances in which Sophia made use of L1 during her grammar explanations: when commenting on the ungrammatical nature of ‘I’m not agree’ and when introducing direct and indirect speech. In both cases Sophia used L1 to compare L1-L2 structures. This adds to the studies reporting the use of L1-L2 comparison by experienced teachers (e.g., Emma and Miquel in Pahissa and Tragant, 2009; Eric in Borg, 1998a, 1998b).

With respect to the first instance, Sophia argues that she used Spanish for different reasons: to give the students a break from L2, to make them focus on her explanation, to stress the item, and to direct their attention:

I had the feeling that maybe resorting to Spanish [...] I thought that it was going to mean a break from all the English and that they were going to focus more on what I was going to say. [...] I thought that I was going to call their attention a bit more. I tend, sometimes, to use Spanish when I maybe I want to stress something in particular, maybe I think that switching from one code to the other and then maybe I also lower my voice sometimes, I tend to think that they might be listening to me or paying more attention, not listening. Like sort of a ... you know, like when you hear

the switch in the code you say ‘what happens?’, you know, ‘what’s going on?’ (**SR2, E2-3**)

Sophia adds that she encourages L1-L2 comparison when the structures in both languages are parallel and claims that the students pay more attention when working on comparisons between languages (**ibid.**). Finally, in relation to using L1 to make grammar content accessible to the learners, this teacher argues that she values L1-L2 comparisons because they allow the students to use their L1 knowledge to make sense of the new language: “I think that it is the knowledge they have and I think that they would resort to that knowledge in order to understand another language” (**ibid.**) (see ‘Factoring In Student Contributions’ in Gatbonton, 1999: 43).

As regards the second instance, Sophia points out that she does not use L1-L2 comparison indiscriminately but when she thinks the students might benefit from it. As in the previous case, this teacher uses this technique to access the learners’ knowledge of L1 which, in turn, is meant to allow them to grasp the nature of the new L2 grammar content:

I think that they benefit from that or that they might benefit at certain points from that. It’s not something that I usually do. It’s not that, if I’m going to teach, suppose, [...] comparatives and superlatives, I am going to ask the students to take a look at what happens in L1 when we use these, or for every other grammar point. But [...] in this case I thought that it was a good starting point to get information from them. Because they have knowledge in L1 so I thought that maybe the comparison could give me the opportunity to elicit knowledge that, up to a certain extent, is similar in the case of the L2 (**SR9, E3**)

The two instances described above show how two knowledge categories (subject-matter and learners) interact and shape Sophia’s application of her GRPK (see Andrews, 2007; Hashweh, 2005).

#### **D. Visual support**

Sophia uses visual aids, usually charts or tables on the board, which might offer learners a graphic representation of the grammar point she is presenting. For instance, she created a table with the functional categories of linking words (**SR3, E3; SR4, E1**) and a chart summarising the main points about

reported speech (**SR9, E1-7**) (see section 'F' below). In addition, she often writes on the blackboard while providing an explanation as a visual support. Such was the case of her explanation of the inaccuracy in 'I'm not agree': "I've tried writing it on the blackboard, crossing out the apostrophe, and making it more graphic, and putting up ... that did work a little bit more. But, you know, writing sort of labels with 'I agree', 'I don't agree', you know, in order to help them ... overcome" (**SR2, E2-3**). Finally, Sophia uses visual support to assist the students in the process of discovery learning. For example, in the presentation of gerunds and to infinitives she handed out a piece of text with the verb phrases containing these two items highlighted in boldface for the learners to find patterns (**SR6, E2**).

### E. Conceptual grouping

Sophia uses this technique to help the learners to grasp the meaning of new grammar content. In the presentation of linking words, for instance, Sophia first grouped the items according to the part of the essay where they would be used (introduction, pros, cons, conclusion) and then into semantic categories (contrasting ideas, listing ideas, summarising, and giving examples) (**SR4, E1**). This technique was used in combination with elicitation.

### F. Summarising

Summarising, or 'rounding up' as Sophia calls it, is a technique she always uses at the end of her presentations so that the learners can see all the points presented about a grammatical content together and can reach a better understanding of each and every part of the item. This technique is usually integrated with elicitation and visual support since she creates charts, tables, graphs, or simply lists by eliciting information from the students:

For the grammar part I think that it's good that they see it on the blackboard, that we use some kind of chart [...] or arrows or things to show all the information. So, as we build the chart, I think that it is good to mention again everything for them to see that, in fact, what we have built on the blackboard, I like to do quite a lot, what we have built on the blackboard now has sense or is connected (**SR9, E1-7**)

### G. Increasing exposure to L2

Increasing the students' exposure to L2 could *arguably* be regarded as a technique which Sophia uses to enhance the learners' understanding of

grammatical points. Consistent with her L2 learning beliefs (see 6.1.1), this teacher claims that plenty of exposure to L2 can assist students in constructing hypotheses about the language: "... students could build certain hypotheses about elements of the text on their own. [...] But they would need more exposure. [...] I think that they would sort of arrive at many more grammatical conclusions on their own than if we ask them for it" (**SR6, E2**). However, during the study she was observed to expose the learners only to the texts offered in the textbook materials in class, possibly as a result of the time constraints imposed by the school context (see 6.1.4 and 6.5.1 A). Tsui explains that teachers' knowledge is 'situated' (i.e. "constituted by their specific contexts of work and their own understanding of and responses to the contexts") and that they are "neither totally determined or constrained by the specific context, nor [are they] completely free to act in whichever way [they want]" (2009: 427). In the case of Sophia, despite her firm conviction about the importance of increasing exposure to L2, she responded to her particular context complaining about her lack of time but never exploring any 'situated possibilities' either inside or outside the classroom.

### 6.4.3 Summary

The exploration of Sophia's GRPK has revealed further evidence about the meaning-focused and communication-oriented nature of her L2 teaching approach. First, formal grammar explanations are kept to a minimum and, instead, alternative approaches which promote meaningful communication are adopted. Sophia believes in treating language as chunks rather than in analysing its discrete grammatical constituents. She also argues that formal explanations are not conducive to L2 learning (at least in the short term) and, therefore, that they are unnecessarily time-consuming. When she does give explanations, these seem to be shaped by her sense not only of the individual student[s] to whom they are addressed but also of the whole class and interacting CFs. Second, the techniques which Sophia uses to represent grammar points and make them accessible to the learners appear to be consistent with her manifested language learning beliefs. They are meant, among other purposes, to guide students in the process of discovery learning, to help them to construct the meaning of new grammatical items, to foster the use of their L1 knowledge to make sense of new L2 grammar points, and to encourage multiple learning styles (e.g., by providing

visual displays and by engaging students in collaborative work). These techniques are often combined, especially with elicitation, and are also expected to facilitate meaningful communication and the development of oral skills. See Appendix 13 to read a summary table of Sophia's GRPK.

## 6.5 Contextual factors

### 6.5.1 Type of institution: State secondary school

#### A. Time constraints

The CF having the strongest and widest impact on Sophia's teaching practices appears to be the 'time constraints' imposed mainly by the school context. The students miss many classes per term because of institutional reasons such as school trips (e.g., going camping), school events (e.g., 'Youth Arts Annual Meeting'), teachers' strikes, and the fact that, unlike other schools, classes at Cortázar School finish in November instead of December. In addition, time restrictions are caused by student absenteeism, which Sophia argues has largely to do with classes taking place in the afternoon shift after a long day of study:

What I do know is that they usually have classes from early in the morning and that then they stop for lunch and then they come, so it's, what you call 'las clases de ingles son a contraturno' [EFL classes in afternoon shift]. So maybe that implies that they do the whole day, then maybe they have a break and maybe they go home, some of them do not return **(SR6)**

Though student absenteeism might result from classes being inconveniently scheduled, it might also originate in some lack of motivation on the part of the learners to attend afternoon classes or EFL lessons in particular. Evidence of this could be found in class 7, which took place alongside a school event ('Organization of American States' debates). All the learners attending these debates were allowed to be absent from class. Eight students out of eleven were absent from Sophia's class, which she assumed had to do with this school event. Two days later the teacher found out that none of her students had participated in the event **(SR7)**. Additional signs of lack of motivation observed in class might include their not bringing their textbook materials, their forgetting to do their

homework, and their reluctance to work on some of the tasks set by the teacher. Finally, some classes are cancelled because of teacher absenteeism. This may be due to exceptional personal or health problems or because the teacher is engaged in teacher development courses. In the eight weeks of observation, Sophia taught ten out of fifteen classes (67%). The five classes which the students missed were because of strikes (2), a school event (1), and teacher development reasons (2). In three of the ten classes observed, less than 30% of the learners were present (on one occasion because of a school trip and a school play they had gone to).

These time constraints naturally have an impact upon Sophia's teaching practices. First, even though she teaches the last level (6<sup>th</sup>) and is not pressed to cover all the units in the syllabus so that the learners are prepared for the next level, she has to make certain choices as to which language aspects to teach and which ones to leave out (**SR6**). This decision is usually taken along with the other staff members and the areas which are prioritised are generally those included in tests (test-based selection) - skills, grammar, and vocabulary (**SI**):

... together with the other teachers, we usually choose the grammar part and the skills work to cover and the rest we don't deal with. You know, sometimes we leave out the communication workshop; we tend to cover the skills part and the grammar part. Since at the end of the year we have to test skills and we have to test grammar and vocabulary, that is the part that we usually cover (**SR6**)

In classes with few students, Sophia gives priority to those aspects which the learners need more practice in, especially the development of oral skills:

The aspects that I decide to cover would be those that I consider that the learners need more practice or that they would benefit from. They might not necessarily be ... like something related to grammar or vocabulary; it could also refer to the skills. That's why I think that the group needs more practice in speaking. That's what I try to encourage (**SR7**)

For instance, in two of the three classes in which less than 30% of the students were present, Sophia focused on listening, speaking, reading, and vocabulary (**SR1**; **SR7**). In the other class, however, she devoted the whole lesson to revising grammar since this was the aspect which the two students present

needed to work on: “[Name of student] rarely speaks and I think he might have as many issues with grammar as [name of another student] has. So [...] that’s why I asked him or I tried to make him speak more and talk about grammar, which is something that, in fact, he has never done in class, never, because the other students do that” (**I2, p. 4**). Sophia asked this student, who had been present for the presentation of reported speech in the previous class and who needed further work on grammar, to explain use and form to the other student, who had been absent from that class. Yet a focus on grammar in this type of lessons is not commonplace. In general, Sophia defers grammar presentations to other classes if few learners are present since, otherwise, she thinks she might need to teach those grammar points again:

... questions related to vocabulary and grammar I might tend not to cover when I don’t have the whole group. Because [...] if it is a question of the skills [...] the progress is in a different way whereas grammar and vocabulary you know that you have to teach again or you’re going to have to repeat that again, especially because students identify that as the part that *is* the teaching, and the something that is different (**ibid.**)

Second, as the students appear to miss many classes, Sophia feels she has to rush to cover the grammar and lexical items agreed with the other teachers. This has a direct impact on her pedagogical decisions. For instance, she claims she would like to promote discovery learning by creating more opportunities for the learners to be in contact with L2. However, she is able to provide only limited exposure to L2 because of time restrictions and, instead, she has to adopt focusing techniques which can help the learners get to the point quickly. Such was the case of the texts she gave the students with some verb phrases highlighted in boldface so that they could easily identify common patterns (i.e. verb + gerund; verb + *to* infinitive) (**SR6, E2**). Another example of the effect of time constraints is on the presentation of grammar points. Sophia argues that, though teachers may have more interesting ideas for grammar presentations, they have to rely on whatever is suggested by the textbook because of time limitations:

... because of questions of time and organisation, resources, we tend to resort too much on the book. Maybe we could find other possible presentations ... because

reported speech is a topic that is not like other grammar points that are more complicated to find, I think we can work with dialogues in films or in other things and then we can work with reported speech, but well, because of a question of time, I resorted to the examples that the book brings **(SR9, E3-4)**

A further impact of time limitations on her decisions is the little practice which she thinks she gives her students **(SR6; I2, p. 5)**. For example, she argues that only two classes were used for the teaching of reported speech, though she would have liked to “devote one whole month to working with reported speech in different circumstances, in different cases, [...] in speaking, in writing, [...] there could’ve been thousands of things probably to do” **(I2, p. 5)**. Likewise, time restrictions have an impact on the nature of the practice which she assigns both in class and as homework. All the exercises she selects are controlled with closed-ended answers (e.g., gap filling). This allows her to provide feedback to the whole class without taking much time **(SR6, grammar practice)**. Still further evidence of the effect of time constraints on Sophia’s decisions can be found in the nature of the oral mistakes which she decides to correct. She focuses on mistakes which the students can easily identify as such and makes corrections which do not take long and which the learners can grasp without difficulty **(SR1, E1-7)** (see 6.1.6).

## **B. Institutional considerations**

The type of institution where EFL classes are taught strongly defines the nature of language teaching practices. For instance, Sophia argues that a school context allows for L1 use more than an institute, which is why she feels free to resort to learners’ L1 knowledge and to encourage L1-L2 comparisons when explaining or discussing grammar content (see 6.4.2 C):

[L1 use] is not usually something that is done at the institute because of this emphasis on using English all the time and not resorting to the L1. But I think that they... that it’s nice to compare the two languages. And after all, this is not an institute. This is a school [...]. I think that when you work at a school you feel free from certain dogmas that you have at institutes like ‘don’t use your L1’, ‘don’t do this’ **(SR2, E2-3)**



Similarly, EFL classes at a school are shaped by the fact that school teachers are expected to teach more than simply the target language. Thus, Sophia assigns homework and requires that learners complete it because she thinks that she is helping learners not only to learn L2 but also to develop responsibility: “when they come to school, [...] this is different from an institute because here they do have a responsibility; it’s the school so we should be teaching more than the language itself but other aspects related to education, you know, being responsible for their homework” (**SR6, grammar practice**). However, the context sometimes represents a hindrance to the teacher’s teaching aims. For example, when discussing the fact that many of her students often fail to hand in their homework, she made the following comment: “I think that in most of the schools English has a lower status to make a scale with all the subjects; [...] English is not considered to be one of the most important subjects as it is in other schools” (**SR6, grammar practice**). This might lead us to assume that learners at Cortázar School perceive that English has a lower status with respect to other areas of study and, therefore, prioritise fulfilling their duties in other subjects rather than in EFL classes.

### 6.5.2 Students

The students’ profile, both individual and as a group, appears to exert a marked effect on Sophia’s decisions and actions. First, Sophia’s learners have a sound L1 knowledge and enjoy tasks which challenge them intellectually (**SR7, E2**) (see 6.1.2). These learner features certainly influence the teacher’s selection of grammar teaching techniques since she has been observed to engage students in L1-L2 comparisons and pair/group/teacher-led discussions (see 6.4.2). Second, the learners tend to be messy and disorganised when they work in class (**SR3, overall questions**) and to get easily distracted (**SR9, E11**). The impact of this on Sophia’s practices has been observed, for instance, in her decision to provide *quick* explanations to individual students so as not to “lose” the rest of the class (**ibid.**) (see 6.4.1). In addition, their messy behaviour sometimes affects the organisation which the teacher has planned for a class. Evidence of this is found in the first presentation of linking words, which did not end up being as Sophia had planned it: “they were a little bit messy so we didn’t exactly follow much of the order I had thought for the class” (**SR3, overall questions**). A further example concerns Sophia’s decision to type some of the

texts or exercises included in the textbook and to make the students work on separate sheets of paper rather than with the book so as to keep their attention and concentration:

Sometimes when they [...] work on a different sheet of paper, although the text is the same as the one in the book, I think that it sort of ... that there comes a time when the book is fine but like, since it's always the same, the organisation of the book, the colour, the way in which the material appears, that sort of ... it doesn't say anything to them, you know. Like if I give it on a separate sheet of paper and they don't open their books and they work with the sheet of paper, maybe they focus better or they pay better attention. [...] since they are rather dispersed from the point of view of their attention and they're rather talkative and they always have something to say to their partners, I think that what sometimes is missing is a question of concentration and attention **(SR6, E2)**

Likewise, the teacher adopts other instructional techniques such as teacher-fronted elicitation and writing on the board to get the learners' attention and keep them focused:

When I want them to pay attention to something in particular like a certain pattern, a certain structure, then maybe I try to take them away from the book, or I try to elicit with the blackboard but not so much with the book because in the book everything seems to be of the same thing. And I think that they tend to pay more attention when we work at the front, with the blackboard, then sometimes they copy from the blackboard when they have it in their books. But I don't tell them not to copy because I think that then well, maybe at least they're focusing, they're looking at the blackboard and writing down, so maybe that helps. It's a question of attention. It's more of a trick really, of a practical trick than what it really does to the learning, to the actual learning. The actual learning could just be helped by the fact that they pay more attention **(ibid.)**

The last two extracts show how CFs help define the use which Sophia makes of her GRPK. That is, she selects from her repertoire of instructional techniques those which are suitable for the particular profile of her students (see 7.2.2).

### 6.5.3 Textbook materials

Textbook materials exert a significant influence on Sophia's grammar decisions and teaching practices. First, the selection and contextualisation of grammar content is always book-based (see 6.1.3), and so is the grammar practice she provides her students with (see 6.1.5). Second, the coursebook influences Sophia's choice of grammar terms. This is evident, for instance, when she is eliciting the semantic categories of linking words and, though the students suggest 'adding', she writes 'listing' on the board, the label used in the students' book (see extract SR4, E2 in 6.3.4). The categories which she ended up eliciting were identical to the ones used in the textbook. Another example is found when the teacher is eliciting the names of tenses used in reported statements. For the statements '*If we have children, I'll try to get a different job*' and '*If we had children, I'd try to get a different job*', the students suggested 'present simple' and 'future *will*' for the first sentence and 'past simple' and '*would*' for the second one. Though this was what the task asked them to do (write the names of tenses), Sophia kept on asking questions until she elicited 'first conditional' and 'second conditional' respectively, which were the labels suggested in the teacher's book. Despite Sophia's close adherence to what the coursebook proposes in relation to the aforementioned aspects, she has also been observed to criticise its monotonous format and to adopt alternative teaching techniques (see 6.5.2).

### 6.5.4 Research project

The research project also seems to have had some impact on Sophia's preparation for her classes. She briefly describes some of the changes which she may have undergone because of my presence in the classroom:

Changes perhaps in terms of being more concerned about ... mainly the organisation of what I was going to do, and maybe taking a closer look at the material and what was going to happen. I think the changes were related to ... like being more aware of what I was going to do in the classroom. No? I think. I wouldn't say prepare but at least being more aware of what I was going to do (I2, p. 3)

### 6.5.5 Summary

The data reveal that the context in which Sophia works plays a crucial role in shaping the nature of her grammar teaching practices. Four main types of CFs have been identified: the type of institution, the students' profile, the textbook

materials, and the research project. These highly influence such aspects as the selection and contextualisation of grammar content; the choice of instructional techniques; the nature and purpose of the homework assigned; the nature and amount of grammar practice provided; and the teacher's class plans, explanations, presentations, error correction, and use of grammatical terminology. This analysis has also unveiled not only the context-related rationale behind Sophia's selection of instructional techniques (GRPK) but also her knowledge of the school context, the students, and the materials. See Appendix 14 to read a summary table of CFs and their impact on Sophia's current practices.

## CHAPTER VII CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS AND RELATIONSHIPS

The purpose of this chapter is two-fold. Section 7.1 aims to compare PLLEs, KAG, GRPK, and CFs in relation to the teachers' grammar teaching practices. In Chapters V and VI, and section 7.1 these factors are examined each in turn, with occasional reference being made to how they relate to one another. Section 7.2 intends to extend our current understanding of the relationships among PLLEs, KAG, GRPK, CFs, and grammar teaching practices by examining these aspects collectively within a framework which conceptualises the process of teaching.

### 7.1 Emma and Sophia compared

This section is meant to compare the two cases under study and, thus, address research issue A: *Are these teachers' grammar teaching practices influenced by similar experiential (PLLEs), cognitive (KAG and GRPK), and contextual factors?* Since the focus of this section is on cross-case analysis and not on providing an overall summary of the cases, attention is paid exclusively to those aspects which can be contrasted and not to individual features which are unique to each participant (for a detailed description of each case, see Chapters V and VI). Before reference is made to the influence of the aforesaid factors, it seems appropriate to highlight the main similarities and differences between Emma's and Sophia's grammar teaching practices (Table 13).

**Table 13:** Comparison of Emma's and Sophia's grammar teaching practices

Emma	Sophia
Grammar-based classes	Communication-based classes
Rationale for grammar teaching: provides 'accountability', helps 'weaker' sts, <i>gives her teaching face validity in the eyes of sts</i>	Rationale for grammar teaching: helps sts develop language awareness and noticing skills, motivates sts through intellectual challenge, fosters meaningful communication, <i>gives her teaching face validity in the eyes of sts</i>
Deductive grammar teaching	Inductive grammar teaching
Explicit grammar teaching	Explicit grammar teaching
Rare incidental grammar teaching	Rare incidental grammar teaching
Grammar teaching involves analysis of discrete items	Grammar teaching involves discussion of chunks
Book/test-based selection of content	Book/test-based selection of content
Grammar content: discrete items at sentence level, not systematic treatment at	Grammar content: focus on chunks instead of discrete items; at and above sentence

discourse level	level
Teacher-fronted presentations	Teacher-fronted presentations
Stages in presentations (fixed): focus, name, form, uses, L1 discussion	Stages in presentations (not fixed): context (book-based), focus + name, previous knowledge, meaning + use, L1-L2 comparison, context (book-based), form, round up
Deductive and language-focused presentations	Inductive and meaning-focused presentations
Use of book terminology and her own	Book-based use of terminology
Simplification of content and terminology	Simplification of content and terminology
Explanations: immediate, spontaneous, short, sense of audience	Explanations: avoided or deferred, short, sense of audience
Book/test-based selection of tasks	Book/test-based selection of tasks
Controlled practice	Controlled practice
Extensive practice	Little practice
Limited integration of grammar with skills	Limited integration of grammar with skills
Teaching techniques: exemplification; use of L1; repetition; metaphors, analogies, images; mnemonics; humour; visual and linguistic support; creating a context; grading level of complexity; error correction	Teaching techniques: elicitation, pair/group work, L1-L2 comparison, visual support, conceptual grouping, summarising, increasing exposure to L2

Table 13 shows that marked differences between these two teacher's grammar teaching practices lie in their overall *language teaching methodology* (grammar-based vs. communicative), their *grammar teaching rationale*, their *grammar teaching approach* (deductive vs. inductive, analysis vs. discussion, and discrete items vs. language chunks) and in their grammar-related *classroom actions* (fixed, deductive, and language-focused vs. variable, inductive, and meaning-focused presentations; immediate vs. avoided or deferred explanations; use of own/book terminology vs. use of book terminology; and extensive vs. limited grammar practice). These differences appear to be associated mainly with dissimilarities in the *nature of their PLLEs*, their *KAG* and their own *perception of and confidence in it*, and the *character of their GRPK*.

The similarities between Emma's and Sophia's grammar teaching practices, on the other hand, are found mainly in relation to the teachers' *classroom behaviour and decisions* (explicit grammar teaching, rare incidental grammar instruction, book/test-based selection of content and tasks, teacher-fronted presentations, simplification of content and terminology, controlled practice, and limited integration of grammar with skills). There is also agreement in one of their reasons for grammar teaching (it gives their teaching face validity in the eyes of the learners). Based on the rationale which Emma and Sophia provided for their grammar teaching actions, most of the aspects they have in

common appear to derive from the influence of *interacting CFs*. There are also some features of their *KAG* which might account for these similarities.

### **7.1.1 PLLEs**

Emma's and Sophia's teaching principles and practices seem to be associated with their PLLEs and teacher training experiences. In the case of Emma, her current teaching practices bear some similarities with those in her private classes (grammar-centred, book-based, controlled practice, and mechanical work) and in her secondary school L2 lessons (structural approach, deductive grammar teaching, concept of 'accountability', controlled practice, grammar-based tests, and use of L1). Some of these practices were reinforced during her TTC in her English grammar classes (focus on the analysis of discrete items and syntax), methodology classes (maxims: textbook guides teaching, give short explanations, and provide relevant practice), and English language lessons (dislike for vagueness). In addition, the TTC appears to have impacted on the development of Emma's teaching beliefs (she acquired behaviourist language learning notions and techniques) and subject matter knowledge (syntax analysis improved her L2 competence and performance). Emma can be said to have experienced some structural belief changes such as the incorporation of new constructs and possibly the reorganisation of the existing structure to contain the new additions (Sendan and Roberts, 1998) and to have undergone some belief change processes like "consolidation/confirmation", "elaboration/polishing", "addition", and "re-ordering" (Cabaroglu and Roberts, 2000: 393-395).

As regards Sophia, her current teaching principles, methodology, and classroom practices are closely associated with her formal (secondary school) and informal L2 learning experiences in Canada (immersion, content-based instruction, discovery learning, and focus on meaning and communication). These notions were reinforced by her methodology classes at the TTC and her initial teaching practices (boom of communicative approach; focus on functions, context, and meaning; and uncertainty about grammar teaching). Furthermore, her present teaching theories and practices could arguably be said to originate in her reaction to negative experiences during her grammar-based private classes (learned very little, was unable to understand connected discourse, and did not develop productive skills) and her grammar classes at the TTC (prescriptive, centred on study of rules and artificial examples of language, focus on discrete

items and syntax analysis which did not help her to develop as an EFL teacher or L2 user, and little development of grammatical terminology). Unlike Emma's case, there is no evidence in Sophia's accounts of addition of new constructs during the TTC, though she seems to have experienced some belief change processes like "consolidation/confirmation" and "elaboration/polishing" (Cabaroğlu and Roberts, 2000: 393-395).

To sum up, despite Emma's and Sophia's extensive experience, their PLLEs and initial teacher training experiences still bear relevance to their present grammar instructional practices. Whereas Emma tends to transfer approaches and techniques which she found effective as an L2 learner, Sophia combines transfers from positive experiences with reactions against negative ones. Worth noting is the fact that, contrary to the unconscious or unwilling replication of prior practices reported about pre-training or novice teachers (Borg, M., 2005; Johnson, 1994), Emma and Sophia appear to be fully aware of their teaching principles and to take informed decisions about their pedagogical actions. Finally, regarding the possibility of a long term impact of their TTC (see 3.2.4), the data have not shown any compelling evidence of such impact in relation to the teachers' grammar teaching practices. However, both Emma and Sophia appear to hold more moderate views about the L2 teaching practices fostered in their TTCs. For instance, Emma is re-examining the value of traditional techniques (e.g., behaviourist tasks introduced in her TTC) and Sophia claims she is building a more natural relationship with grammar (she provides a clear rationale for grammar teaching and engages, though occasionally, in the teaching of discrete grammar points).

### **7.1.2 KAG**

Differences between Emma's and Sophia's grammar teaching practices may also derive from aspects concerning their KAG. Though both teachers display a relatively solid KAG at the level they teach, they differ in their capacity to verbalise it and in their perception of and confidence in it. Overall, Emma possesses a sound explicit knowledge of discrete grammar items, feels confident teaching grammar to intermediate students, and is aware of the terminology of the grammar content she teaches. This might in part explain the grammar-based character of her classes, her deductive and language-centred approach to grammar teaching, her focus on discrete grammar points, her immediate



response to students' grammar questions (e.g., explanations, exemplifications, definitions, and L1-L2 comparisons), and her predisposition to filter input from the textbook and the learners. Sophia, on the other hand, claims that she finds it difficult to verbalise grammar rules and to provide explanations, and that she lacks confidence in her knowledge of grammar content and terminology. This possibly accounts for the subordinate role she assigns to grammar teaching, her focus on chunks and meaning-oriented discussions, her tendency to avoid or defer explanations, and her sporadic and book-based use of terminology.

The study of Emma and Sophia's KAG also revealed some 'fuzzy' areas and some manifestations of lack of confidence. Though Emma claimed she felt confident, she recurrently used epistemic stance adverbials of doubt and hedging expressions when providing explanations and rules. She was also observed to use strategies to protect herself (e.g., bouncing questions back to learners) and stated she was sometimes afraid of losing control and not being able to respond to students' questions during impromptu grammar work. Sophia insisted that grammar was not her element and that she usually felt doubtful when dealing with grammar questions. In both cases, these peculiarities possibly translated into a heavy reliance on the textbook (e.g., to select content, tasks, and context; and to provide rules and grammatical terms), an occasional engagement with incidental grammar teaching, and the simplification of content and terminology.

### **7.1.3 GRPK**

A fuller understanding of the differences between Emma's and Sophia's grammar teaching practices may be gained if we compare their GRPK. Emma tends to provide concise, spontaneous, immediate explanations about discrete grammar points and uses a variety of teacher-centred instructional techniques to make grammar content accessible to the learners, especially 'weaker' ones. These language-focused explanations and techniques, together with her fixed presentations and extensive controlled practice, were consistent with her overall deductive approach to grammar teaching. Unlike Emma, Sophia avoids or defers grammar explanations whenever possible and, instead, engages students in meaning-focused discussions. Her teaching strategies are student-centred and communication-oriented, and are meant to facilitate inductive learning. Though both teachers share a couple of teaching techniques (L1-L2 comparison and visual support), they use them in distinct ways and for different purposes.

Whereas Emma contrasts the two languages herself and draws charts to accompany her teacher-fronted explanations, Sophia elicits information from the students to compare L1-L2 (on rare occasions) and to create charts or tables which might offer a graphic representation of the content under discussion and to assist students in the process of discovery learning. It is worth highlighting that in both cases, especially Emma's, L1-L2 comparison involves some translation. This echoes the findings in Pahissa and Tragant (2009) and Zeng and Murphy (2007), and further confirms the claim that this technique is commonly used by NNS teachers working in monolingual contexts (Árva and Medgyes, 2000; Medgyes, 1994; Reves and Medgyes, 1994).

#### **7.1.4 Contextual factors**

Most of the similarities between Emma's and Sophia's teaching practices appear to be closely related to interacting CFs. In both cases, *time constraints* may be regarded as the CF exerting the strongest and widest influence on their practices. It has an impact on the selection of grammar content and tasks (book-based and test-oriented) as well as on some pedagogical decisions (short explanations and feedback, simplification of content and terminology, use of focusing teaching techniques, teacher-fronted presentations, controlled practice, homework used to compensate for classes missed, and little or no impromptu grammar work). In the case of Emma, time constraints may also help define her overall deductive approach to grammar instruction.

Two further influential CFs are the *students* and the *type of institution* (secondary school). These influence each other and give shape to some of the teachers' decisions. For instance, some institutional considerations (EFL classes perceived as having lower status than other subjects, EFL classes inconveniently scheduled, and use of L1 allowed) reinforce some learner features (short attention span, easily distracted, monolingual class, and tendency to use L1). As a result, teachers take some pedagogical decisions to cope with these aspects (e.g., short explanations and feedback; teacher-fronted presentations; and use of focusing techniques, L1, visual support, repetition, and elicitation). The students' profile (enjoy intellectual challenge and possess good L1 background knowledge) also motivates some teacher actions (L1-L2 comparison, language analysis, pair-group discussions, and discovery learning). The fact that the learners expect to be taught grammar influences the teachers' decision to include a grammar

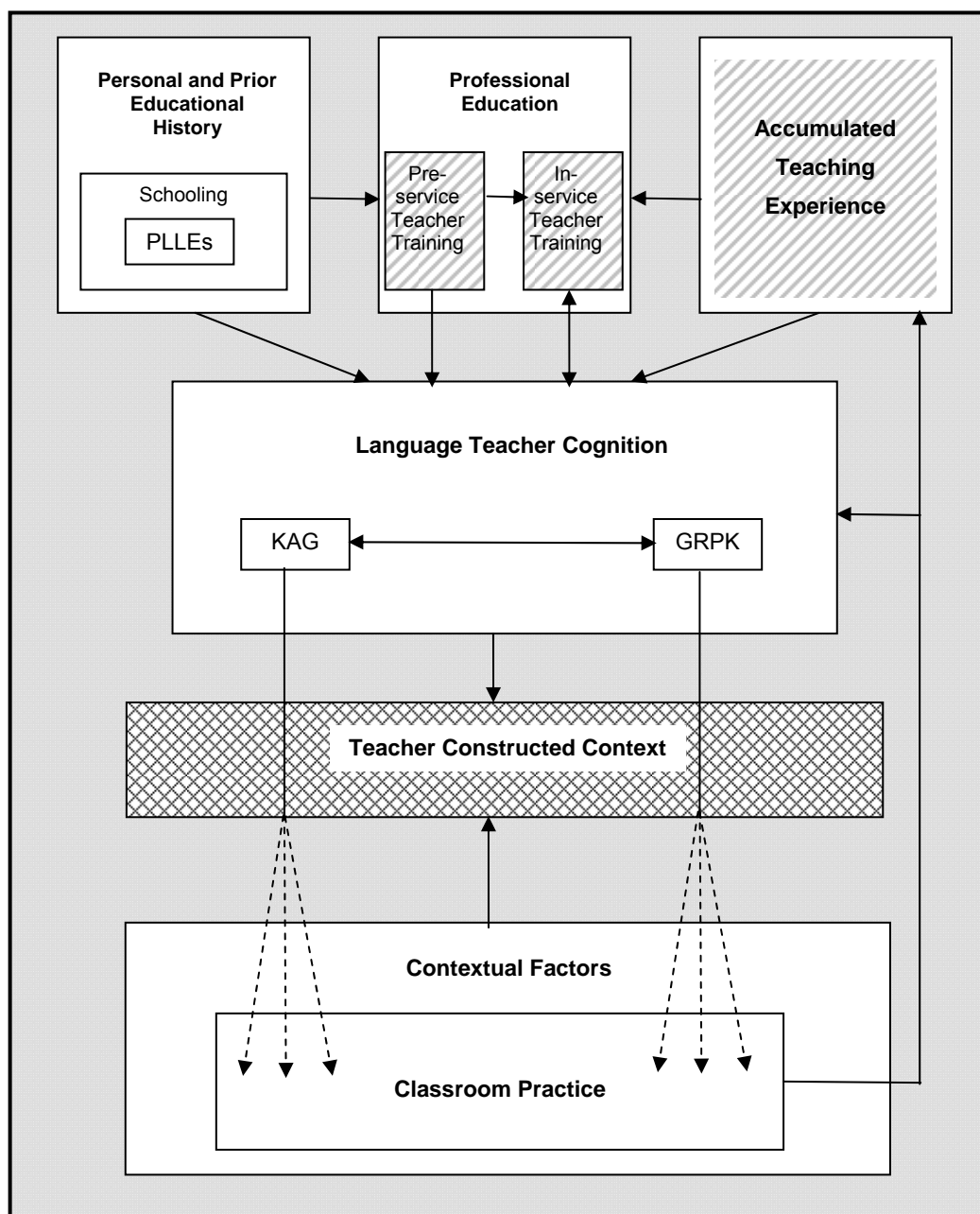
component in their teaching, since this gives their lessons face validity in the eyes of the students.

Finally, the *textbook materials* and the *other EFL teachers* play a role in shaping some of Emma's and Sophia's grammar instructional practices. For example, grammar content and tests are agreed by all the members of the EFL department. Though each teacher is free to introduce additional items, they are expected to cover a list of grammar points and to prepare learners for the type of test exercises designed by the whole staff. As explained before, the textbook materials, which are selected by the EFL staff as well, also define the type of content to be taught (e.g., what tense uses to emphasise), the terminology to be adopted, the linguistic context to be used, and the practice to be provided.

## 7.2 Relationships among PLLEs, KAG, GRPK, and CFs

The purpose of this section is to analyse the foci of my study (PLLEs, KAG, GRPK and CFs) collectively so as to see how different factors interact to help define teachers' grammar teaching practices. Thus, it addresses research issue B and the core topic of this thesis: the relationships among experience, teacher cognition, context, and classroom practice.

Based on Borg's schematic conceptualization of teaching (Figure 1, p. 13), Figure 5 provides the framework to discuss the complex interaction among the experiential, cognitive, and contextual factors explored in this study. Overall, the diagram offers a representation of the sources which inform language teacher cognition and the process of applying teacher cognitions in classroom practice. The first source is the language teacher's *personal and prior educational history*, part of which is their *schooling* experiences, including their *PLLEs*. These experiences play a pivotal role in teachers' lives since they influence their subsequent cognitive development and their engagement in and the impact of professional education (see 3.2, 5.2, 6.2, and 7.1.1). A second source is the teacher's *professional education*, consisting partly of their *pre-service* and *in-service teacher training* and shaped both by their personal and prior educational history and by their accumulated teaching experience. Finally, a third source is the teacher's teaching experience, including individual *classroom practices* and their *accumulated teaching experience*. Though the present research project reports some findings in relation to the impact of the teachers' pre-service and in-service teacher education (e.g., see 5.2.3, 6.2.4, and 8.2) and accumulated

**Figure 5:** Language teacher cognition: sources, context, and practice

teaching experience (e.g., see 5.1.3, 6.2.5, and 8.2), these areas need further research which provides insights into the way they inform language teacher cognition.

The rest of Figure 5 shows the realisation of teacher cognition in classroom practice and, unlike Borg's diagram, it sheds light particularly in the key role which context plays in mediating cognitions and practice. The teacher constructs a context (*teacher constructed context*) which is instantiated by the

interaction between their *language teacher cognition* and the *contextual factors* around and inside the classroom. This means that what filters the application of teacher cognitions in classroom practice are not contextual agents per se (e.g., 'weaker students') but the construction which the teacher makes of such agents (e.g., the teacher's perception and understanding of 'weaker learners'). This teacher constructed context is essentially prismatic, dispersing individual cognitions into a spectrum of manifestations. Once teaching practices take place, they may influence, consciously or unconsciously, the teacher's language teacher cognition and may add to their accumulated teaching experience. Sections 7.2.1 and 7.2.2 provide examples derived from Emma's and Sophia's data respectively to illustrate the relationships represented in Figure 5.

### **7.2.1 Some relationships in Emma's data**

Different examples of the interactions represented in Figure 5 can be found in Emma's data. Some relationships can be observed, for instance, in relation to her simplification of grammar content, concepts and terminology. Emma was aware of some *contextual factors* around and inside her classroom practices which she felt she had to cope with: profile of students, school setting, time availability, and teaching objectives. In the interaction between these factors and her language teacher cognition, Emma appeared to perceive and understand the context where she worked in her own particular way (*teacher constructed context*). Informed by her *accumulated teaching experience* at secondary schools and possibly by her own experience as a secondary school learner (*schooling*), she thought that her students were able and willing to handle a limited amount of information at a time, that they disliked long and detailed explanations, and that their motivation was often low because they were not studying L2 of their own free will but as part of the school requirements. She was also concerned for some 'weaker' learners in class who could cope only with a certain level of complexity. Her especial concern for 'weaker' students had originated in her own *prior educational history* (her efforts in her private EFL classes to learn grammar items with complex rules or too many exceptions, her own frustrating experience in music lessons trying to grasp music symbols, and her concern for weaker fellow students at secondary school). In relation to the school setting, Emma perceived it as imposing some linguistic limitations on her teaching (e.g., grammar content was expected to be treated more superficially than in other L2 teaching contexts

such as private institutes). As regards time availability, Emma claimed that she was always beset by time constraints since her students missed too many classes per term and she needed to rush to cover the main contents in the syllabus. Finally, she believed that her main teaching objective was to prepare learners to complete coursework and tests successfully. As a result of the mediating nature of the teacher constructed context, Emma's *GRPK* was realised in practice in the following ways: she dealt with few items at a time; filtered students' contributions when eliciting information; reduced conceptual complexity (e.g., by using tangible images and metaphors); made up her own simplified rules and tips; provided rules which were practice and test-oriented; adopted teaching techniques which helped learners, especially 'weaker' ones, to understand new grammar content (e.g., use of L1, repetition, and visual and linguistic support); and omitted specific grammatical terminology. Likewise, the teacher constructed context had an impact on the application of Emma's *KAG*: despite her solid *KAG* at the level she taught at school, her attempts to simplify grammar content and terms sometimes resulted in 'fuzzy' areas in her manifestations of this type of knowledge (e.g., see her feedback in the use of PPC and her explanations on the uses of PPC and PPS in 5.3.2), and shaped the nature of the grammatical input she exposed her students to (e.g., she avoided grammar terms in explanations, used generic or umbrella labels, simplified terms into misleading ones, or used wrong terminology).

The mediating role of the *teacher constructed context* is especially evident in the nature of Emma's grammar explanations and grammar teaching techniques (*GRPK*). In addition to time constraints and the particular profile of secondary school students, Emma perceived that her classes had been inconveniently scheduled immediately after lunch, which had a detrimental effect on her learners (they felt tired and became more easily distracted and talkative, which reduced their already short attention span). This highly defined the type of explanations she provided: concise and to the point, grading the level of complexity from simple to complex by introducing no more than one or two grammar points at a time. This was in line with one of the maxims promoted in her *pre-service teacher training* ('give short explanations') and with her current belief that a good secondary school teacher should be concise. Her selection of grammar teaching techniques was also shaped by the *teacher constructed context*. She often gave explanations in L1 since it allowed her to save time and

to check whether the students had paid attention. Moreover, she resorted to humour and repetition to motivate the learners and to attract their attention. Finally, she used metaphors, analogies, and images to turn abstract concepts into tangible images and to help learners to internalise new concepts more quickly.

Further grammar-related pedagogical decisions and actions were shaped by the *teacher constructed context* and were clearly associated with some of the *sources* of Emma's cognitions. Methodological influences within the institution were the teaching approach adopted in other school subjects to present content and the decisions taken by the EFL department. In order to adapt to this context, Emma made grammar presentations which resembled those in other classes: teacher-fronted, explicit, and deductive. This, in turn, allowed her to cope better with time restrictions. Additionally, she based her syllabus design, selection of grammar content (discrete items at the sentence level) and tasks (controlled), and tests on the textbook selected by all EFL staff members. Emma's teacher-fronted, explicit, deductive, and book-based teaching practices and focus on the aforementioned types of content and tasks were associated with her own *PLLEs* (private classes and secondary school), with one of the maxims she was encouraged to follow in her *pre-service methodology classes* ('the textbook guides your teaching'), and with her positive experiences in her *pre-service grammar classes* (structural grammar). Accordingly, most manifestations of Emma's *KAG* in the classroom involved discrete intra-sentential grammar points. Her sound knowledge of these grammatical aspects might also help define the realisation of her *GRPK* (e.g., immediate responses to students' questions, readiness to filter their input, and the extensive use of exemplification and L1-L2 comparisons). This might serve to illustrate the close *interaction between KAG and GRPK*.

### 7.2.2 Some relationships in Sophia's data

Examples which might illustrate the relationships among language teacher cognition, its sources, context, and practice can also be found in Sophia's data. Two powerful contextual factors which shaped Sophia's *teacher constructed context* were the learners' profile and time availability. According to Sophia, students at Cortázar School tend to have a good L1 background knowledge and to enjoy tasks which pose some intellectual challenge. This heavily influenced her

use of inductive grammar teaching techniques which involved, for instance, L1-L2 comparisons and conceptual grouping (*GRPK*). These inductive pedagogical practices were rooted mainly in her *personal and prior educational history* and in her *KAG*. In Canada, she experienced inductive L2 learning inside and outside the classroom, which helped her to develop L2 communicative competence. All classes were content-based and Sophia particularly enjoyed the lessons given by her French language teacher, who used the Direct Method and taught grammar inductively. Sophia's preference for inductive teaching was strengthened during her *pre-service teacher training* as a reaction to her negative experiences in her grammar classes. These classes were prescriptive and deductive in nature, and centred on the study of rules, the production of what Sophia regarded as artificial language, and the analysis of discrete items and syntax. Sophia thought that this grammar approach, which came into conflict with the pre-existing L2 learning beliefs she had developed in Canada, did not contribute to her development as an EFL teacher or user. With respect to her *KAG*, Sophia has been observed to lack confidence in it, which might additionally account for her choice of an inductive approach to grammar instruction. On several occasions she expressed the view that grammar was not her element and that it always represented a challenge in her classes. She also said that she felt doubtful when students asked her grammar questions and that she was unable to provide categorical answers or rules. That is why, instead of introducing grammar content deductively, she felt more confident engaging the learners in class discussions and in discovering rules by themselves. This shows the close *relationship between her KAG and GRPK*. As regards time availability, Sophia claimed that she had to cope with time constraints all the time, mainly because of institutional reasons and student absenteeism. This had an impact on the application of her *GRPK* since she felt restricted to using pedagogical strategies which fostered discovery learning but which were also time-saving (e.g., elicitation, visual support, and teacher-led discussions). Her selection of teaching techniques also seemed to be influenced by her perception of the students in this particular class (messy, disorganised, and easily distracted). To cope with this, she claimed she adopted 'teacher-guided' techniques (*GRPK*). One of them was elicitation, which she used widely to guide learners in the process of discovery learning, to enhance their understanding of content, to help them make associations, to capture their attention, to activate their previous knowledge, and to recycle items.



Another strategy was visual support. She drew charts and tables on the board and highlighted items in written texts to facilitate the process of inductive learning, to offer a graphic representation of the content discussed orally, and to accompany explanations. In view of the fact that her French teacher in Canada adhered closely to the principles of the Direct Method, there is every chance that she may have been exposed to an extensive use of oral elicitation and visual support in her *PLLEs*.

### **7.3 Conclusion**

Section 7.1 shows that *PLLEs*, KAG, GRPK and CFs play a key role in accounting for the differences and similarities between Emma's and Sophia's grammar teaching practices. In general, experiential and cognitive factors appear to explain the major differences between these teachers' practices and to impact not only on their classroom actions but also on their teaching rationales, theories, and approach. The study of CFs has been insightful for it has helped us to understand how two teachers, despite their distinct experiential and cognitive backgrounds and their differing views of L2 learning and grammar teaching, come to take similar classroom decisions and actions. Similarities between Emma's and Sophia's instructional practices have also been associated with their perception of and lack of confidence in their KAG. This might indicate that a comprehensive study of KAG should cater not only for the manifestations of teachers' explicit and implicit grammatical awareness but also for their perceptions and confidence in it.

Section 7.2 has cast further light on the intricate nature of the conceptualisation of teaching. It describes the different sources which inform language teacher cognition (personal and prior educational history, professional education, and accumulated teaching experience) and illustrates the way cognitions are mediated by a unique context (teacher constructed context) which is instantiated by the interaction between cognitive and contextual factors. Thus, teachers provide grammar explanations and adopt teaching techniques (GRPK) which better allow them to accommodate to the demands and limitations imposed by the specific context they perceive. Regarding their KAG, teachers often find themselves unable to use their KAG to their full potential due to the mediation of the teacher constructed context, which may lead them, for instance, to simplify grammar content and to unwittingly deviate from providing accurate instructions

and explanations. The influential nature of the context in teaching practices suggests that the study of teacher cognition be carried out in context for findings to bear direct relevance to actual teaching practices. Finally, it could also be observed in 7.2 that KAG and GRPK are intimately interwoven and tend to reinforce each other, which mirrors the findings in other studies (e.g., Johnston and Goettsch, 2000). This further confirms the claim that “pedagogical constructions are topic specific” (Hashweh, 2005: 274).

The following chapter will discuss the main contributions of the present study.

## **CHAPTER VIII DISCUSSION OF MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS**

This chapter outlines the main contributions of this study. In general terms, these are related to the regional and educational context explored, the rich descriptive and interpretive data produced, the exploration of the private domain of teaching, its two-fold focus on individual factors and the interplay among them, the insights provided into the nature of PCK and subject matter knowledge and their application in classroom practice, and the type of methodology adopted.

### **8.1 Regional and educational context explored**

As pointed out at the outset of this thesis, there seems to be a power imbalance between developed and developing countries in terms of the amount of research undertaken in their contexts. This stark reality is clearly reflected in the field of TESOL, where the focus has been mostly on studying teachers and practices based in English-speaking 'first-world' nations such as the USA, the UK, Canada, and Australia, and where NNS classrooms are marginalised contexts in the agenda of research institutions and practitioners. The picture is even more disheartening if we analyse the little research interest in state secondary schools, even though, paradoxically, most EFL/ESL teaching worldwide takes place in these institutional contexts (Borg, 2003a, 2006; Hayes, 2005, 2009a, 2009b). The findings of the present study are expected to help redress this imbalance and reality by making visible some teaching practices in an under-researched regional, educational, and institutional context (state secondary school EFL classrooms in Argentina) and by making the voices of two NNS EFL practitioners heard.

The description of the educational context in Chapter II illustrates the importance assigned to FL education in the school system in Argentina (9 years of compulsory FL instruction, mostly or exclusively EFL), which supports the claim above that most EFL teaching occurs in these institutional settings and accentuates the necessity to explore the FL teaching practices taking place in them. Some common features have been identified between the state secondary school EFL context described in this study and those reported in the literature. Similar to the portraits of secondary EFL classrooms in Hong Kong (e.g., Richards and Pennington, 1998; Urmston, 2003) and Catalonia (Pahissa and Tragant, 2009), teaching practices at Cortázar School are markedly teacher-centred, textbook-based, and exam-oriented, with L1 used to supplement L2

instruction. Further characteristics that this study revealed about this institutional context which *might* reflect the reality of secondary school EFL education worldwide, especially in developing countries, include: basic building facilities and limited materials resources due to budgetary restrictions (see Zappa-Hollman, 2007), major time constraints, institutional issues (e.g., learners attending classes not of their own free will but to comply with school requirements, teachers expected to teach more than L2 such as learner responsibility, and EFL perceived as having lower status than other school subjects), linguistic limitations (e.g., content treated more superficially), and methodological considerations (e.g., teacher-fronted presentations resembling those in other school classes). All this has been observed to have a profound impact on the selection of tasks and content, the teaching approaches adopted, class dynamics, teaching decisions, and the application of teacher knowledge.

Some differences have also been found between secondary EFL education at Cortázar School and that described in other studies. For instance, Andrews (1999b) and Hayes (2005) report on the lack of professional training of the NNS EFL practising teachers they studied. This does not coincide with the reality at state university schools in Argentina like Cortázar School, where all teachers are fully qualified, though it does mirror the situation in most other state schools in this country, where above 80% of EFL teachers appear not to hold subject-specific qualifications (Armendáriz, interview data, 12/2007). A further dissimilarity is related to the top-down nature of decision-making vis-à-vis syllabus design, content and task selection, and teaching methodology described in some studies, with senior staff members urging newcomers to preserve the status quo of the teaching context (e.g., Hayes, 2009a; Richards and Pennington, 1998; and Urmston, 2003). EFL teachers at Cortázar School, on the other hand, enjoy complete freedom to design their class syllabi and, regardless of their seniority and hierarchy within the EFL department, they jointly agree on what language aspects to teach and test, what textbook materials to adopt, and what tasks to include in classes and end-of-term exams. What is more, within their own classrooms, each teacher is free to focus on some additional content and to choose whatever teaching methodology they favour.

In addition to the aforesaid features of secondary school EFL education, the observation of actual EFL lessons and naturally-occurring events has provided *primary* evidence of how real EFL grammar teaching unfolds in this

particular context. This adds to the findings of other studies focusing on similar practices, participants, and contexts (Andrews, 1999b; Borg, S. 2005; Pahissa and Tragant, 2009). The data in my study disclosed detailed information, for instance, about grammar teaching approaches and styles, instructional strategies, syllabus design, content and task selection, class plans, presentation of new items, integration of language and skills work, choice and use of teaching materials and resources, teachers' and students' use of L1 and L2, teacher and student roles, teacher-learner interaction, corrective feedback, use of metalanguage, instances of metatalk, and motivational techniques. The exploration of CFs has shed light on the many and varied internal and external contextual constraints which secondary school teachers have to deal with on a daily basis, and on how experienced educators make use of whatever experience or knowledge they have available to succeed in their limiting contexts.

## **8.2 The unobservable aspects of EFL grammar teaching**

The study was not limited to describing the *observable* aspects of the participants' EFL grammar instructional practices but it also explored the *unobservable* features of their grammar teaching through the use of data collection methods such as SR and teacher diaries. In addition to the teachers' PLLEs, KAG, and GRPK (see 8.3 and 8.4 below), these methods have made it possible to examine how teaching experience informs teacher decision-making and pedagogical actions; the participants' perceptions and beliefs about EFL learning and teaching; and their knowledge of the learners, syllabus, and context, and the interplay of different knowledge categories which shapes grammar practices.

The data revealed that grammar teaching experience has played a crucial role in the development of the teachers' pedagogical and subject matter knowledge. Emma, for example, regularly engages in reflective practice and is able to make explicit the knowledge she has gained from experience. Tsui refers to this capacity of expert teachers as 'theorizing practical knowledge' (2009: 429). This constant reflection has led Emma to develop her own personal pedagogy (consisting of traditional and more current teaching strategies) which allows her to meet the demands of the particular instructional contexts she works in. A similar case is that of Eric, an experienced EFL teacher reported in Borg, 1998a and 1999a (see 3.5). Emma's active involvement with grammar teaching and

reflective practice, her readiness to re-examine traditional techniques and to transfer experience from one context to another, her engagement in language awareness courses and workshops, and her PLLEs and love for grammar have facilitated the development of her grammar teaching expertise. This concurs with the claims in the literature that gaining teaching expertise in an area requires time and effort investment as well as actively seeking relevant knowledge and professional challenges (Andrews, 2006; Borg, S. 2005; and Tsui, 2003).

Unlike Emma, Sophia does not appear to have sought professional development in grammar teaching. Her PLLEs and her teaching approach along the years have been communication-oriented and meaning-focused. Her engagement with grammar in class is minimised as much as possible and is meant mostly to comply with the demands of the context (e.g., to prepare learners for end-of-term grammar-based tests or because the students expect to be taught grammar). A similar case is that of Joel, an experienced NNS EFL teacher in Catalonia who strongly supports communicative L2 approaches and teaches grammar in order to prepare students for the *selectivitat* examination (Pahissa and Tragant, 2009). Sophia claims that she has learned grammar and grammar instructional strategies principally through her teaching experience. This has allowed her to build a 'database' of grammar-related knowledge (Johnston and Goettsch, 2000) which she resorts to whenever she teaches grammar. Despite her seeming lack of expertise in grammar teaching, she is able to provide a full rationale for L2 grammar instruction and believes that she is currently developing a more natural relationship with it. Worth noting is that in both Emma's and Sophia's cases teaching experience appears to nourish the development of more moderate views about grammar instruction and L2 teaching in general. Sophia seems to have acquired expertise in other L2 teaching areas such as the development of oral skills, which further confirms the claim that, within one discipline, a person may develop expertise in some areas and not in others (Andrews, 2006; Borg, 2001; and Tsui, 2003). Her case in this respect resembles that of Dave, who had a sound PCK in relation to the teaching of vocabulary, reading, and writing, but who had not gained expertise in grammar instruction, possibly due to the lack of on-going experience teaching this content (Borg, 2001).

The data also showed that teaching experience has greatly contributed to the development of Emma's and Sophia's knowledge of learners and context.

Evidence of Emma's knowledge of learners is found, for instance, in the selection and simplification of content and tasks; in her anticipation of students' needs, questions, and difficulties; and in her choice of instructional techniques which make grammar content comprehensible to all learners, especially 'weaker' ones. The awareness of learners' potential difficulties is outlined by Andrews and McNeill (2005) as one of the features of the TLA of good language teachers (also see Tsui, 2003). Sophia's teaching has been observed to be learner-oriented and, therefore, to be based on her knowledge of students. For example, she explained that the structure of her grammar presentations is not fixed, variations depending to some extent on the group of learners she is teaching grammar to. Likewise, the nature of her explanations is determined by her sense of the whole class and of individual students (see 6.4.1). Her criteria for error correction are partly based on their linguistic needs and capacities. In addition, both Emma and Sophia appear to integrate whatever knowledge and experience learners have into their own teaching (e.g., Emma invites them to provide their own examples and Sophia activates their previous knowledge in presentations). Gattbonton has labelled this domain of pedagogical knowledge as 'Factoring in Student Contributions' (1999: 42). Two other domains feature in Emma's data in particular: 'Handling Language Items' and 'Determining the Contents of Teaching' (*ibid.*). Finally, both teachers have displayed knowledge of the syllabus (their own and those in other levels, possibly because they are jointly designed by all the staff members) and of the secondary school context in which they work (e.g., Emma gives deductive presentations which resemble those used in other school subjects and Sophia makes occasional use of the learners' L1).

One of the main contributions of this study in terms of displaying the complex nature of grammar teaching is to show, in addition to the relationships of the factors under study, the interplay of different knowledge categories associated with teachers' pedagogical decisions and actions. One instance in Emma's data is her gradual presentation of tense uses at secondary school, where four types of knowledge (subject matter, context, learners, and pedagogy) interact to help define her actions (see 5.1.3). An example in Sophia's case is the flexible structure of her presentations, which is determined by her knowledge of the grammar item to teach, her learners, the institutional and classroom context, and the pedagogical techniques she has access to. The intricate interaction of

knowledge categories inherent in teachers' practices is discussed in Andrews, 2007; Hashweh, 2005; and Johnston and Goettsch, 2000.

### **8.3 PLLEs, KAG, and GRPK**

The findings have thrown further light on the complex ways in which each of the experiential and cognitive factors under study (PLLEs, KAG, and GRPK) is associated with the teachers' grammar teaching practices (Chapters V and VI, and section 7.1).

#### **PLLEs**

Very little research has been done on experienced teachers' PLLEs, and even less has explored their impact on practitioners' actual teaching practices (e.g., Borg, 1999a; Hayes, 2005, 2009a; Pahissa and Tragant, 2009; and Zeng and Murphy, 2007). With respect to the exploration of mental images derived from prior schooling experiences, the two studies included in 3.2.1 (Calderhead and Robson, 1991; and Johnson, 1994) examined teacher trainees and only the latter paper focused on *language* education in particular. My findings revealed that, despite their many years of teaching experience, experienced teachers are able to recall vivid images from their PLLEs and that many of these bear immediate relevance to their current teaching practices. Emma, for instance, distinctly remembers one of her secondary school EFL teachers, whose personality and methodology may have influenced her present focus on grammar teaching, her concern for 'weaker' learners, and her tendency to simplify content and overuse repetition (5.2.2). She also associates her concern for 'weaker' students and her decision to provide them with 'tangible' items to study with her own previous experience striving to learn music. This instance suggests that, though most recollections of images and transfers of strategies from prior learning experiences appear to be *subject-specific*, it is very likely that teachers may relate current practices to *other* schooling experiences apart from those in their teaching field. As regards Sophia, she evokes vivid memories of her own L2 teachers and their practices, and associates them with stereotyped notions of good teaching (e.g., her Canadian teachers being committed and active) and bad teaching (e.g., her private teacher sitting at her desk all the class). These mental representations immediately relate to her stated teaching principles and the classroom practices observed (e.g., committed personality and dynamic classes).



Unlike the inexperienced participants in Johnson (1994), Emma and Sophia did not report having any conflicting images which might lead them to unwittingly or unwillingly revert to prior teaching behaviours or actions. This might be the result of many years of teaching experience (e.g., of testing out alternative teaching strategies) and of active engagement in reflective practice, which may have allowed them to develop solid practical knowledge and a varied repertoire of instructional strategies.

In addition, the data showed that, even after more than thirty years of teaching experience, teachers are likely to transfer methods and techniques present in their PLLEs. The tendency is clearly for replicating approaches and strategies which they found effective or positive as L2 learners, and for rejecting those which they associate with negative experiences. Despite these transfers, Emma and Sophia's decisions and actions do not appear to be circumscribed in any way by their PLLEs, as is the case of the *pre-service* teachers reported in some studies. In Warford and Reeves (2003), for instance, two of the NNS trainees could not envision themselves teaching in any other way but following the models they had been exposed to. Likewise, the student teachers in Johnson (1994) and the one in Borg, M. (2005) reluctantly slipped back into ways of teaching which they rejected. On the other hand, Emma's and Sophia's cases are similar to those of the *qualified* and *experienced* practitioners described in the literature. These teachers were fully aware of the contributions which certain methods had made to their own L2 learning and made informed transfers from their positive PLLEs (e.g., Hayes, 2009a; Pahissa and Tragant, 2009; and Zeng and Murphy, 2007). Once again, Emma's and Sophia's teaching experience provides them with some leeway as a result of the 'database' of strategies which they may have built along the years and which they currently have access to.

The study of the participants' PLLEs also provided insights about the role which these experiences may have had in the development and perception of their KAG. In this respect, the literature discusses the impact which the KAG developed during PLLEs (e.g., secondary school) may have on teachers' current teaching practices. This influence appeared to be 'direct' either because the teachers had not received any professional training (Andrews, 1999b), had not taken any subject matter classes in their TTCs (Reeves, 2009), or because their TTCs had advocated communicative approaches which neglected grammar instruction (Borg, 1999a). This is precisely not the case of Emma and Sophia,

both of whom received instruction in L2 grammar and language awareness in their TTCs for 4 or 5 years and, therefore, gained further academic experience in relation to the subject matter. Like Martha and Hanna (Borg, 1999a), Emma had metalinguistically rich yet communicatively unrewarding PLLEs but, unlike them, she developed a keen interest in grammar which was then reinforced in her TTC. This allowed her to build up a solid explicit KAG and a positive perception of it, which is reflected in her professional engagement with grammar. Sophia also had metalinguistically rich but communicatively unrewarding PLLEs (private classes), but then had more gratifying grammar-free and content-based PLLEs (secondary school in Canada), which helped her to acquire L2 communicative competence. Her meaning-centred pre-training beliefs were reinforced at the TTC by her methodology classes and the prescriptive grammar lessons she rejected. All this contributed to shaping her disinterest in extending her KAG and her perception of her KAG, which naturally explains the subordinate role she assigns to grammar teaching in her current practices these days.

## **KAG**

FL teachers' KAG is certainly an under-explored area within L2 teacher research. The tendency in the 1980s and 1990s was to examine quantitatively the explicit knowledge of a limited number of discrete grammatical items at the sentence level. Some studies focused on NS student teachers training to teach English to NS learners (Bloor, 1986; Chandler et al., 1988; Williamson and Hardman, 1995; and Wray, 1993), whereas others involved EFL prospective teachers (Andrews, 1994) and practising ones (Andrews, 1999a). The next decade witnessed an interest in exploring different aspects of EFL/ESL teachers' KAG in relation to actual classroom practices (see Andrews and McNeill, 2005; Borg, 2001; and Johnston and Goettsch, 2000). Yet research which casts further light on the relationships between teachers' KAG and practice appears to be necessary (Borg, 2003a and 2003b). The present study helps advance our understanding of KAG by focusing on teachers' both *explicit* and *implicit* KAG, by examining a much *larger* number of grammar points *at* and *above* the sentence level, and by exploring KAG not only through a GJT but also through class observation and SR sessions based on *real practices*.

The findings of this study indicate that exploring teachers' KAG is not an easy task and that multiple methods collecting both *generated* and *naturally*

*occurring* data are necessary to obtain a realistic picture of the intricate nature of this cognitive construct and the modifications it undergoes when it is applied. Emma's and Sophia's responses in the GJT, their overall performance in class, and the rationale they provided in SR interviews suggest that they have a solid KAG. Yet, on a few occasions, they were observed to give confusing instructions, to convey grammatical notions which were conceptually inaccurate, to accept students' mistaken suggestions, and to omit or misuse grammatical terms. These 'fuzzy' areas are not indicative of lack of knowledge of the grammatical points involved as these teachers showed awareness of some of them in other instances (e.g., knowledge of tenses in the case of Emma). Furthermore, it has been observed that the application of teachers' KAG is influenced by a large number of contextual, situational, professional, attitudinal, and personal factors (e.g., Andrews, 2007). It thus seems inappropriate to conclude that teachers have 'limitations' in their KAG on the basis of a single test or questionnaire they complete (see studies from the 1980s and 1990s above) or simply because they have been observed to give misleading examples or rules, or to omit to use specific terminology in class, or even when they appear to acknowledge such 'limitations' in SR sessions. Claims of this kind appear to be simplistic and to deny the intrinsic complex nature of subject matter knowledge and its manifestations.

The data disclosed different aspects of the teachers' KAG and its application both in the GJT and in class. First, Emma's and Sophia's responses in the GJT showed a gap between 'error correction' and 'error explanation', though this was not as wide as the ones reported in the literature (Andrews, 1999a; Andrews and McNeill, 2005). This does not seem to be a "cause for concern" (Andrews, 1999a: 156) in the case of the teachers in my study since, as explained in Chapters V and VI, their responses may have been influenced by multiple factors (e.g., the type and huge number of errors in the texts and personal circumstances) rather than by 'limitations' in their KAG, and since their error explanations in class and in the SR sessions showed they had a solid KAG. Moreover, a comparatively low performance in error explanation is not suggestive of lack of KAG, for there is every possibility, as in the case of Sophia, that the teacher may possess a sound KAG but may be unable to verbalise some grammar rules or uses (*implicit* KAG). Second, the data revealed that a variety of forces impact on the application of teachers' KAG. This adds to Andrews'

description of professional, attitudinal, and contextual influences (2007: 41-46). Some of the aspects defining the application of Emma's and Sophia's KAG in class include: teaching goals, teaching approach (e.g., meaning-oriented), limiting contextual (e.g., time restrictions and learners' profile) and situational (e.g., learners becoming messy and talkative) factors, professional profile (e.g., teaching experience), personal circumstances (e.g., teacher's distraction or tiredness), simplification of content, and teachers' confidence (or lack thereof) in their KAG. More often than not, these factors account for the teachers' decision not to filter input for learners and for the manifestations of 'fuzzy' areas in their KAG. For example, Sophia was observed not to filter the input the students received from the worksheets and to trust textbook materials blindly, possibly not because of 'limitations' in her KAG, as was the case of Rose in Andrews (1999b), but because of her meaning-oriented language teaching approach and her lack of confidence in her explicit KAG. Likewise, Sophia and Emma sometimes used misleading grammatical terms (e.g., 'persons' instead of 'personal pronouns') not because of lack of knowledge but because they intended to simplify their explanations. Finally, worth highlighting are the rich descriptive and interpretive data vis-à-vis the teachers' implicit KAG (to my knowledge, this study is the only one exploring and describing L2 practitioners' *implicit* KAG), the fuzzy areas in their KAG, their confidence (or lack thereof) in their KAG (Borg, 2001 explores teachers' self-perceptions of their KAG), and their use of grammatical terminology (see Borg, 1999a).

### **GRPK**

Though grammar teaching, along with literacy instruction, is the curricular domain attracting the most attention in L2 teacher cognition research, GRPK still remains an under-researched construct. Some studies have focused on specific aspects of grammar teaching such as the nature of good grammar explanations (Johnston and Goettsch, 2000) and the integration of grammar in teaching practices (Borg and Burns, 2008). Others have been concerned with grammar work in a broader sense, including the way it relates to different teacher factors, and, therefore, better reflect the complexity of grammar instruction: the influence of personal pedagogical systems on grammar-related pedagogical decisions (Borg, 1998a); the methodological, psychological, and experiential factors giving shape to metatalk (Borg, 1998b); the relationship between self-perceived KAG

and PCK (Borg, 2001); the impact of the nature and development of KAG on grammar teaching practices (Borg, S. 2005); and the role of metatalk and grammar teaching beliefs, and the experiential, cognitive, and contextual aspects associated with them (Pahissa and Tragant, 2009).

The present study combines an interest in grammar teaching practices in general (see 5.1, 6.1, 7.1, and 7.2) and GRPK in particular. As regards the latter, the findings throw light on the 'transformation' and 'instruction' processes of Shulman et al.'s framework of pedagogical reasoning (Shulman, 1987). First, the data provided a full description of the techniques which Emma and Sophia employed to make grammar items comprehensible to learners. Previous studies have mentioned the use of some strategies like exemplification (Johnston and Goettsch, 2000), L1-L2 comparison (Borg, 1998a, 1998b; Pahissa and Tragant, 2009), and error correction (Borg, 1998a), but none of them has examined the *full* repertoire of techniques which particular teachers adopt and the rationale behind their use. Second, the study described the nature of Emma's and Sophia's grammar explanations and the reasons for their use. Worth noting is the fact that the *concise* character of their explanations also featured in those provided by other experienced teachers working in state secondary schools (Pahissa and Tragant, 2009). Other aspects (e.g., Emma providing and eliciting examples, and Sophia engaging learners in discovering rules) were perceived by some experienced practitioners as characteristics of good explanations (Johnston and Goettsch, 2000). Regardless of their specific traits, both Emma's and Sophia's techniques and explanations were highly consistent with their overall grammar teaching approach and stated beliefs. Finally, a distinctive attribute of Emma's GRPK is her recurrent simplification of content, a feature which was also reported in the literature in relation to other experienced EFL teachers working at state secondary schools (Pahissa and Tragant, 2009). It seems appropriate to highlight that the rationale behind the teachers' use of techniques, explanations, and simplification was often linked to other teacher knowledge categories (e.g., knowledge of subject matter, learners, context, and syllabus), which further illustrates the complex interactions among experiential and cognitive factors within teacher knowledge base.

#### 8.4 Relationships among PLLEs, KAG, GRPK, and CFs

Borg argues that “further research is required for us to understand not just what language teachers have cognitions about, but how the different elements in teachers’ cognitive systems interact” (2006: 272). Most previous research on PLLEs, KAG, and GRPK has either focused on individual constructs (e.g., Andrews, 1997, 2001; Andrews and McNeill, 2005; Borg, M., 2005) or explored several aspects but described them mainly one by one without establishing any relationships among them (e.g., Pahissa and Tragant, 2009). There are a few studies which include some discussion of the interplay of these factors, usually no more than two, in relation to classroom practice: the use of grammar teaching techniques (*GRPK*) derived from *PLLEs* (Borg, 1998a, 2005); the methodological (*GRPK*), psychological (confidence in *KAG?*), and experiential (e.g., *PLLEs*) factors giving shape to the role of metatalk in L2 teaching practices (Borg, 1998b); the influence of the *KAG* (explicit, implicit, and confidence) gained during *PLLEs* on teachers’ attitude and approach to grammar teaching (Andrews, 1999b); the impact of the development of metalinguistic awareness (*KAG*) during *PLLEs* on the teaching of grammatical terminology (Borg, 1999a); the influence of self-perceptions of *KAG* upon grammar-related pedagogical decisions and instructional strategies (*GRPK*) (Borg, 2001, 2005); and the effect of the *KAG* (implicit or explicit) acquired during *PLLEs* and *TTCs* on teachers’ attitudes towards explicit grammar instruction (Reeves, 2009). Borg (2003a, 2006) made a significant contribution to the field by providing a schematic representation of teaching and by discussing the interactions among teacher cognition, schooling, professional education, and classroom practice. The present study extends our understanding of the nature of language teaching by throwing further light on the sources which inform language teacher cognition and on the way cognitions are realised in classroom practice. With respect to the latter aspect, the findings provide insights into the mediating role of the context which the teacher constructs in relation to the contextual factors inside and outside their classroom practice. Figure 5 and the examples from Emma’s and Sophia’s data which illustrate it reveal the *complex*, *dynamic*, and *multidirectional* relationships among experiential, cognitive, and contextual factors in real grammar teaching practices (see 7.2).

### **8.5 Teacher knowledge and language teacher knowledge**

Even though its focus has been on EFL grammar teaching, the present study contributes to our understandings of PCK and subject-matter knowledge in relation to teacher knowledge in general and language teacher knowledge in particular.

Recent developments in the study of teacher knowledge suggest not only that PCK consists of discrete categories of knowledge but also that teachers employ them synergistically in the pre-active and interactive phases of teaching (Abell, 2008). Subject-matter knowledge, pedagogical knowledge (also referred to as knowledge of 'teaching'), and knowledge of students feature as PCK domains in many studies across different fields such as mathematics (e.g., Ball et al., 2008), science (e.g., Lee and Luft, 2008; Rollnick et al., 2008), and applied linguistics (e.g., Andrews, 2007). Other components mentioned in the literature include knowledge of context (e.g., Andrews, 2007; Nilsson, 2008; Rollnick et al., 2008) and knowledge of curriculum (e.g., Andrews, 2007; Ball et al., 2008; Lee and Luft, 2008). Yet, PCK cannot be seen simply as the sum of its constituent parts, but as an amalgam of knowledge categories which blend to address instructional issues (Abell, 2008; Rollnick et al., 2008). In the field of language teaching in particular, PCK has been regarded as a "messy and unworkable concept" (Freeman, 2002: 6) and some researchers question the applicability of the notion of this construct to language instruction in view of the fact that "the content and medium of learning are often seen to be inextricably linked" (Borg, 2006: 80).

Despite the latter claims, the findings of my study reveal that there exist distinct PCK manifestations in L2 teaching which can provide insights not only into the nature of PCK but also into the way it interacts with other knowledge domains in classroom practice. In Emma's and Sophia's data, the amalgam between subject-matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge could be observed in the nature of the teachers' grammar explanations (5.4.1 and 6.4.1), their use of instructional techniques (5.4.2 and 6.4.2), and in Emma's simplification of content and terminology (5.4.3 and 7.2.1). It could also be noticed that these manifestations were closely and intricately associated with other types of knowledge (knowledge of learners, knowledge of context, and knowledge of syllabus). However, it is difficult to argue whether these knowledge categories act as components of PCK or as independent constructs influencing

its application. This testifies to the claims that, though convenient for research purposes, separating the teacher knowledge base into discrete domains is not always possible or necessary given the complex relationships among them (Johnston and Goettsch, 2000; Nilsson, 2008). Notwithstanding the findings reported in other fields on the multidimensional character of PCK, this is an issue which needs further research.

The literature on teacher knowledge additionally highlights the centrality of subject-matter knowledge in PCK (Abell, 2008). In their characterisation of PCK, Ball et al. (2008), for example, do not list content knowledge as an individual component within PCK but as integrated into the other three constituent parts: knowledge of *content* and students, knowledge of *content* and teaching, and knowledge of *content* and curriculum. This clearly shows the pivotal role of content knowledge in PCK. Similarly, in their model for PCK, Rollnick et al. (2008) describe the “amalgamation of SMK [subject-matter knowledge] with the other three knowledge domains” (knowledge of students, general pedagogical knowledge, and knowledge of context) to produce classroom manifestations of teacher knowledge (p. 1380-1381). With respect to language teacher knowledge, the role of subject-matter knowledge in PCK appears to be even more central given the fact that the content and medium of instruction are often intimately related. In the present study, the close relationship between subject-matter knowledge and PCK was observed in the impact which the teachers’ understanding of the subject-matter and confidence (or lack thereof) in it had on the pedagogical strategies they employed and on their capacity to represent content to the learners. For instance, Emma’s solid KAG and confidence in it at the level she taught at school highly influenced the manifestations of her GRPK: e.g., immediate responses to students’ questions and comments, spontaneous explanations graded at different levels of difficulty, and extensive use of a varied repertoire of instructional techniques (e.g., exemplification, L1-L2 comparisons, and metaphors). The findings also showed that the application of PCK in turn had an impact on the realisation of the teachers’ subject-matter knowledge. An example is the way Emma’s simplification of content and terminology (GRPK) sometimes resulted in fuzzy manifestations of her KAG.

As regards developments in subject-matter knowledge in particular, in the field of mathematics Ball et al. (2008) distinguish between ‘common content knowledge’ (CCK) and ‘specialized content knowledge’ (SCK). They define CCK



as “the [content] knowledge and skill used in settings other than teaching”, that is to say, that is “not unique to teaching” such as identifying mistakes and carrying out content-related tasks (p. 399). SCK refers to “the [content] knowledge and skill unique to teaching”, in other words, “not typically needed for purposes other than teaching” (p. 400). This includes, for instance, “responding to students’ ‘why’ questions”, “recognizing what is involved in using a particular representation”, and “connecting a topic being taught to topics from prior or future years” (ibid.). This distinction is similar to that made by Shulman (1987) between the content understanding of a teacher and that of a non-teaching peer (see 3.3.1) and by Andrews (1999b), in language education, between “the language knowledge / awareness of the educated user of a language and that required by the teacher of that language” (p. 163) (see 3.3.2). In the present study, manifestations of CCK and SCK were observed, for example, in the teachers’ corrections of students’ oral contributions (CCK), their use of examples to make a grammatical point (SCK), their selection of suitable instructional techniques to make content comprehensible to learners (SCK), and in their simplification of content and terminology to adapt to the students’ understanding of L2 grammar (SCK). In addition, the findings showed that SCK is topic-specific and that, within one field, teachers may possess a more developed SCK in some aspects than in others. Sophia’s SCK, for instance, was more sophisticated in relation to vocabulary and skills development than to grammar.

Finally, with reference to both PCK and subject-matter knowledge, my research project has shed further light on the conceptualisation of teaching, principally on the application of teacher knowledge in classroom practice and the mediating influence of ‘teacher constructed context’ (see 7.2 and 8.4). These findings are relevant to teacher knowledge as well as language teacher knowledge. Concerning the latter field in particular, the study has added to our understanding of the way PLLEs impact on teachers’ professional education and the development and perception of their GRPK and KAG.

## **8.6 Methodology**

Last but not least, the contribution of this research work is methodological. Constant reference has been made in the literature review to the methodological gaps which this study intends to fill (e.g., see pp. 22, 29, 50, 66, 68, and 72-73). The specific research design used has allowed me to probe deeply into teachers’

both classroom and mental worlds and to gain insights into the way grammar instruction unfolds in their actual teaching practices. The use of multi-methods has provided multiple perspectives for me to explore the factors under study, including my own and those of the participants. The study has also shown not only the potential benefits and drawbacks of different methods in terms of the type of data they can collect, but also the way they should be administered efficiently and ethically (see 4.3.2). The description of the findings has unveiled how data derived from different sources can be triangulated and can thus increase our understanding of teachers' rationales and interpretations. The procedures for data analysis can also inform further analysis of similar data (see 4.5). The fact that the teachers and I share a similar socio-cultural, educational, and linguistic background (see Andrews, 2001) has allowed me to adopt a unique emic perspective and to gain particular insights into their practices and the meaning they assign to their pedagogical decisions and actions. Finally, the constructive and non-judgemental approach of this research project represents a step forward to move beyond an emphasis on teacher effectiveness in the study of teacher knowledge and the simplistic and restricted view of teaching this entails.

### **8.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the main contributions of this study in relation to areas which had been identified as needing further research. The next chapter will outline the implications of this research projects and will put forward recommendations for future research.

## **CHAPTER IX CONCLUSION**

### **9.1 Implications**

Though it is virtually impossible to ponder all the implications of a research project, I expect the findings of my study to serve more than academic purposes, the two participants, and the school where this study was carried out. In this section, I would like to discuss the benefits of my research to a wider audience, including disciplinary experts, researchers, practitioners, and materials writers.

#### **A. Teacher cognition experts**

The findings of this study are expected to inform the field of teacher cognition, especially with reference to the sources which inform language teacher cognition and to the nature and the realisation of KAG and GRPK in the grammar teaching practices of experienced NNS teachers. In addition to the individual exploration of PLLEs, KAG, GRPK, and CFs, this study has added to our knowledge of the complex, multidirectional, and dynamic nature of the relationships among these constructs in relation to grammar instruction in a specific context. This will enrich experts' understanding of not only individual factors but also the interaction among them in teaching practice.

#### **B. Researchers**

The study reports on a number of effective methodological procedures for exploring PLLEs, KAG, GRPK, CFs, and grammar teaching practices. Researchers wishing to study similar aspects can build on these procedures and lend them more validity by following some of the suggestions made, for instance, in the pilot study and description of the cases (e.g., conducting a follow-up interview after the GJT to produce more conclusive results). This research project is also of value to those involved in case study research since it provides an illustrative example of an embedded two-case study design. It may also be useful for researchers particularly interested in class observation, stimulated recall, interviews, and autobiographical accounts, regardless of the focus or design of their research.

**C. Student teachers, teachers, and teacher trainers**

The rich descriptive and interpretive data derived from this study have enormous potential for promoting teacher development of different kinds. In initial TTCs, they can help raise pre-service teachers' awareness of what actual grammar teaching practices entail in state secondary schools. The data also have the value of providing evidence of different approaches to grammar teaching and a wide repertoire of instructional techniques. In addition to awareness-raising tasks, trainees can be encouraged to engage in group discussions about issues emerging from the reading of the cases. In in-service teacher education programmes, the data can be used to promote reflective practice and the development of critical and analytical thinking skills (see 'reflection' process in Shulman et al.'s model of pedagogical reasoning; Shulman, 1987). Given the level of inhibition which self-reflection may involve in this type of training, in-service teachers can be encouraged first to reflect on the practices of Emma and Sophia, and then on their own teaching. Borg claims that "teacher development activities which draw upon vivid portraits of teaching and teachers to be found in research data can provide an ideal platform for the kind of other-oriented inquiry which facilitates self-reflection" (1998c: 273). Thus, teachers would be encouraged and trained to "move from other-oriented reflection to self-reflection" (ibid.: 279). Emma's and Sophia's reflective process (e.g., stimulated recall) can additionally serve as a model of reflective practice both for teacher trainers and for participants.

Finally, the focus of the study on actual EFL teaching practices makes its findings more meaningful to practising EFL teachers and heads of departments, especially if they have a similar profile as the participants and if they work in a similar educational and institutional context. Considering the detailed descriptions of the cases, I presume that EFL teachers and managers will be in a position to examine the practical implications of these findings by themselves.

**D. Materials designers**

The rich descriptive data of this study can be of direct relevance to those involved in materials design. Currently, there are new projects in some provincial ministries of education in Argentina to produce their own primary and secondary school materials for the different subjects. This study may inform the design of resources for the teaching and practice of foreign languages, especially

grammar. It may help these materials writers to become more acquainted with FL grammar practices at secondary school and, therefore, to design tailor-made materials which are meaningful and meet realistic objectives. There is also a relatively recent tendency for ELT publishers to regionalise their textbook materials and resources. The findings of this study may provide a good basis for the design of EFL grammar materials for Argentine state secondary schools.

## **9.2 Limitations**

There are some limitations of this study which must be acknowledged. First, the project bears unique characteristics in terms of where and when it was carried out, who were involved, and the particular circumstances in which the data were collected. As a result, limited generalisation is warranted to other contexts and practitioners, not even to teachers within the same institutional setting. Yet, as stated in 4.2.3, through the rich descriptive and interpretive data provided, readers will be in a position to draw their own generalisations and make transferences to their own realities. Second, some methods made only minor contributions to the study. The GJT did not produce compelling evidence about the teachers' KAG due to the absence of a follow-up interview to discuss this task (see 4.3.2 C, 5.3.1 B, and 6.3.1 B). The teacher diaries provided limited data since, apart from the autobiographical accounts, the participants ended up submitting only three entries in all. Third, as acknowledged in 5.5.5, 6.5.4, and 9.4, Emma's and Sophia's sustained involvement in this research project and their regular interactions with me appear to have had an impact on their cognitions, practices, and, therefore, on the data generated. This has affected my original intention to observe and record naturally occurring events. Fourth, I am fully aware that my perception and interpretations of events and data, though validated by the participants at the end of the project, may be biased by my own personal, academic, and professional background, by my particular relationship with the teachers, and by my prior understanding of the aspects being explored. For instance, I have known Emma and Sophia for 16 years since they were my tutors at the TTC where I trained as an EFL teacher. This academic experience with them may have influenced my perception and understanding of the teaching actions which I observed and then interpreted. The fact that I wrote a first draft of the literature review may have also had an impact at the moment of codifying the data, deriving categories, and gaining insights, though I consciously made sure I

did not refer back to this review during the data collection and data analysis processes. In addition, the relationships among the factors under study established in 7.2 represent my own perspective of the issues at this particular time and circumstances. Since the meaning constructed during data analysis is the result of a transaction between the researcher, the data, and the particular conditions in which this analysis is made, it is very likely that other people would come up with a different set of relationships, or that even myself would construct meaning in a different way in other circumstances. Fifth, as we reduce the material (from transcript to themes, codes, and then categories), it becomes difficult to make justice to the richness of the data. Consequently, there is an inevitable conceptual loss in the process. Finally, I would like to point out that all the translations of the teachers' accounts and the events observed were made by me. To add reliability, I checked some sections which could be confusing with an Spanish-English translator and then all the translations with the participants.

### **9.3 Recommendations for future research**

Based on the findings, contributions, implications and limitations of this study, I would like to make the following recommendations for future research.

- For TESOL research to claim worldwide legitimacy, future research interests should include under-explored regional, educational, and institutional contexts (e.g., developing countries, EFL settings, state education, and primary and secondary schools). It also seems necessary to explore the professional lives and practices of NNS teachers, and that researchers and participants share a similar socio-cultural, educational, and linguistic background.
- In order to add validity to the findings of this study, I would encourage its replication in similar and alternative contexts. Though research is needed on both novice and experienced practitioners, I would insist on studying qualified and experienced teachers and on adopting a non-judgemental stance towards their practices and rationales. This would represent a break from a focus on teacher effectiveness.
- More than the study of individual factors, I would suggest that research be done on the interaction among the different elements of teachers' cognitive bases and CFs in real classroom contexts. This will allow us to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the complex, dynamic, and

multidirectional relationships among them. I would also recommend that the interplay of different factors be examined in the same teacher teaching different groups of learners (e.g., children, adolescents, and adults) and types of courses (e.g., exam courses, ESP courses, whole-language courses, and different proficiency levels). This would shed further light on the mediating role of teacher constructed knowledge. Also worthy of research is the relation between the interplay of factors and student learning.

- Professional education and accumulated teaching experience appear to play a key role in knowledge development. Longitudinal studies should be carried out to explore knowledge growth (e.g., subject-matter knowledge and PCK) in relation to these two sources of teacher cognition.

#### 9.4 Final remarks

This seems to be the end of a story which started back in section 1.1. I would like to conclude this thesis reflecting upon a few comments which the protagonists of this story, Emma and Sophia, made in their final interviews.

[Participating in this project] made me wonder or adjust things [...] that I had left [...] too flexible like ‘why do I do this?’, ‘why do I take for granted that it is only one meaning of a verb that I have to teach?’, ‘why is it [...] that I simplify some explanations and later on some exercises if I consider that this group is an advanced group within the fifth level?’ (Emma, I2, pp. 2-3)

These classes, I liked them very much, because it is a way of seeing myself from a different point of view at the same time. I mean, I’m answering all your questions and I think that I *have* an answer and I *can*. [...] But at the same time I realised things about me, especially, well, listening to myself talking, something that we should do more often. [...] I liked talking about the way that I have learned and what I really wanted to do with my profession at the very start of it. I liked that. I thought that it was interesting for me to realise how, somehow, I felt that I had a voice about grammar or the teaching of grammar (Emma, I2, p. 3)

The discussion after each class was very interesting. I’m not usually that much focused perhaps on grammar, so I think that it was good for me to think about grammar aspects [...] I felt very challenged at the beginning, not so comfortable with discussing grammar so much, [...] but then more comfortable or more natural with [it] [...] I was surprised that there were so many things about grammar to talk about. [...]

It was interesting because I am sort of, although I have been teaching for a number of years, sort of becoming more concerned with grammar. So I think that it was interesting that it came at a point in which I'm becoming more interested in grammar **(Sophia, I2, p. 1)**

[I] found that there were better possibilities for dealing with [grammar], I am sure that I will always remember those better possibilities and that I will make use of them. [...] But then things related to [...] the teaching of grammar in general; I think that I would be paying more attention to what I do as far as grammar is concerned **(Sophia, I2, p. 2)**

This question of discussing once [the class] is over with another person I think that it could be something that I could take into consideration for other moments within my profession, [...] it is advisable that, whenever one can do it, one could devote sometime to a more focused discussion with another colleague or with another teacher of what has happened in the classroom. [...] even though we are teachers and we have taught for a long time, that does not mean that that practice is over, [...] there is nothing of a problem there, that one should accept it as something that is more natural. So I did give [your class observation] as an example [to my teacher trainees at the TTC]. I told them that I am being observed so they shouldn't be concerned about having somebody observe their classes, that that should be something more normal **(Sophia, I2, p. 3)**

These comments succinctly reflect that language teacher research like the present study also carries direct implications for the teachers participating in it. Both teachers recognise the impact of being involved in reflective practice, especially that taking place in SR sessions. Apart from the influence on practical matters, they emphasise the importance of looking at their practices adopting other viewpoints, of paying attention to class components which are usually not focused in their teaching, and of working with colleagues collaboratively through peer observation and post-lesson discussions. This promotes not only self-reflection but also the development of critical thinking skills. Worth highlighting is also the domino effect which engagement in research may produce (e.g., Sophia transferring her experience to her trainees). Finally, these reflections show the value of the methodological stance adopted in this study since the teachers have the chance of having their voices heard and of making their own contributions to the field. Research projects that involve meaningful experiences to their



participants and that provide significant descriptive and interpretive data certainly help bridge the gap between research work and practitioners.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: Sample copy of teacher consent

#### CONSENT FORM

I freely and voluntarily consent to be a participant in the research project on the topic of 'Teacher Cognition and Grammar Teaching Practices' to be conducted by Hugo Santiago Sanchez as part of his MPhil/PhD thesis at the Centre for Applied Linguistics, University of Warwick. I understand that the contents of the study have been disclosed only partially so as to avoid the contamination of data. I have been informed that the data collection methods to be used include interviews, class observations, stimulated recall, a teacher's diary (including an autobiographical account), a grammar-correction exercise, and the analysis of documents (my curriculum vitae, class syllabus, and students' writings). I have been explained the nature of these methods to my satisfaction. I understand that my participation will take between 8 and 12 months.

I have been told that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I also understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from it at any time without giving any reason and without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way. In addition, I am free to decline to respond to any particular question(s) or to complete any particular task(s). Should I withdraw from the study before data collection is completed, my data will be returned to me or destroyed. I can also ask the researcher to delete or not make use of some of the information I provide.

My real name will not be linked with the research materials and I will not be identified or identifiable in any report subsequently produced by the researcher. I understand that my information will be held and processed to be used anonymously for internal publication for Mr. Sanchez's PhD thesis and submitted for assessment with a view to being published in academic journals and conferences.

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have been informed that if I have any general questions about this project, I should feel free to contact Mr. Sanchez at his e-mail address: [H.S.Sanchez@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:H.S.Sanchez@warwick.ac.uk). If I have any comments or concerns about the ethics or procedures involved in this study, I can contact Mr. Sanchez's supervisor, Dr. Annamaria Pinter, at her e-mail address: [Annamaria.Pinter@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:Annamaria.Pinter@warwick.ac.uk).

I have read and understand the above and consent to participate in this study. I understand that I will be able to keep a copy of this consent form for my records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I have explained and defined in detail the research procedure in which the participant has consented to participate. I will retain a copy of this consent form for my records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## APPENDIX 2: Grammaticality judgement task

Dear ...,

I would like you to correct the following students' writings **(1)** and **(2)**.

For each text:

- 1- Identify **all** the grammar mistakes
- 2- Provide the correct grammar version of each faulty part
- 3- Name the grammar aspect in each correction (e.g., *passive voice*)
- 4- Explain the grammatical rule which you think has been broken (e.g., *passive voice should have been used instead of active voice*)

I need you to focus **only** on grammar mistakes and to carry out the correction **without** resorting to any reference sources but your own mind!

Thank you very much for your co-operation.

Santiago

### (1)

<p>She thought she <u>will</u> (1) never love again. April's heart seemed getting out of her chest as she was staring out of the train window remembering the reason why she was there. Between her hands a china mug of hot chocolate contrasting with the freezing wind and heavy snow that covered everything from horizon to horizon. April's wet amber eyes looked left as a young, dark-haired man had opened the door and sat opposite her.</p> <p>From the moment Richard opened the door, he could not take his enormous black eyes from April's sad, hopeless face. A million thoughts went through Richard's mind while trying to deduce what April's eyes were reflected. A few words came out of April's soft lips as she looked out the snowy landscape. Puzzling, Richard slowly turned his eyes towards her, listening to April's pleasant voice. Felt his deep eyes on her, April shyly was introduced herself.</p> <p>Hours went by while Richard and April talked as if they knew each other since years. April's necessity in expressing her feelings were evident and inevitable. Her eyes reflected her sorrow, her words flow out of her mouth as never before. Sadly, April told him she was escaping from deception, betrayal. In her soft voice she explained that her husband lied to her since years. The existence of other woman and children had broken her heart and buried her</p>	<p>(1) <b>would</b> – modal verb to express prediction - the past form should have been used instead of <i>will</i></p>
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<p>dreams in a snowy grave. Richard clear understood April sorrow and contented her with a smile.</p> <p>Hours and minutes seemed being endless, eternally, and measureless as they talked about their own lifes, painful past and hopefully futures. Although hours had gone by, fine light snow continued to fall, guiding them towards a unique path.</p> <p>They were about to arrive in Rome where April was supposing to stop. Richard luminous eyes begged her for staying with him, for believing in love again. April stood up, took her bag and stare through the window. She was the only one who she had the power to change her live. Silently, April sat next to him, took his hand and kissed him in the sweetest way possible. The train departed and outside the snow had continued to fall.</p>	
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(2)

<p><b><i>The person who most influence my life</i></b></p> <p>My uncle is the only person who influenced by his behaviour. I wish I could be like him some day. He is lovely person to know him well and who does not know. He did not say any word hurt the feeling of anybody or did something make the people angry from him. He always smile to the people and he help them if they have any problem.</p> <p>He did not say NO to any person ask the help from him. He is very kind to his family give them what ever they need soon as fast he can. He always take care of them and asking them about if they need anything, he comfort them. He has a lot of friend from every country, and all of them liked him too much because he serve them any time they need him and quickly. All that a little bit of my uncle personality. I wish I can say more but what ever I said it will nothing to him.</p> <p>Taken from Gass &amp; Selinker (1994)</p>	
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### APPENDIX 3: Analysis of Emma's GJT - categories and examples

C O R R E C T I O N S	<b>Mistakes identified and corrected</b>	<p>1. April's wet amber eyes looked left as a young, dark-haired man <u>had opened</u> the door and sat opposite her Emma (E): <b>opened</b></p> <p>2. A million thoughts went through Richard's mind while trying to deduce what April's eyes <u>were reflected</u> E: <b>were reflecting / reflected</b></p> <p>3. He did not say NO to any person <u>ask the help from him</u> E: <b>who asks him for help</b></p>
	<b>Mistakes not identified</b>	<p>1. April's heart seemed to get out of her chest as she <u>was staring out</u> of the train window remembering the reason why she was there</p> <p>2. April's necessity <u>in expressing</u> her feelings</p> <p>3. He did not say any <u>word</u></p>
	<b>Mistakes identified but not corrected</b>	<p>1. The person who most <u>influence</u> my life</p> <p>2. <u>All that a little bit of</u> my uncle personality</p>
	<b>Unnecessary correction</b>	<p>1. April's heart seemed to get out of her chest as she was staring out of the train window <u>remembering</u> the reason why she was there E: <b>and remembered</b> – vb form: remember is a state vb that is usually used in finite form.</p> <p>2. <u>Between</u> her hands E: <b>in</b> - Vocabulary is sometimes a grammar problem. Collocation : in her hands ??</p> <p>3. Although hours had gone by, ...(*) fine ...(**) light snow continued to fall E: (*) <b>a / the</b> – article needed?? (**) <b>comma</b> ??</p>
	<b>Wrong correction</b>	<p>1. a china mug of hot chocolate contrasting <u>with</u> the freezing wind and heavy snow E: <b>contrasted + no preposition</b> – finite verb and collocation</p> <p>2. My uncle is the only person who influenced <u>by his behaviour</u> E: <b>? influenced my behaviour</b> Researcher (R): <i>This correction might change the meaning intended by the writer (his/my behaviour).</i></p> <p>3. all of them <u>liked</u> him too much E: <b>likes</b> - tense shift Researcher (R): <b>like</b> – simple present (third person plural) to refer to a state existing in the present / This should be in past simple if this tense was previously used to describe his uncle's typical behaviour</p>
	<b>Lack of confidence</b>	<p>1. She was the only one who <u>she</u> had the power E: <b>nothing</b> – double subject??</p> <p>2. Although hours had gone by, ...(*) fine ...(**) light snow continued to fall E: (*) <b>a / the</b> – article needed?? (**) <b>comma</b> ??</p> <p>3. He has a lot of friend from every country</p>



		E: from every country <b>that he has visited</b> ??? sth is missing
T E R M I N O L O G Y	<b>Mentioned and used correctly</b>	1. Finite verb: <i>contrasted</i> 2. Past continuous, state verb, past simple: <i>were reflecting / reflected</i> 3. Preposition: <i>at</i> 4. Past participle, passive voice, adjective: <i>puzzled</i> 5. Present participle, participial phrase: <i>feeling</i>
	<b>Not mentioned</b>	1. To infinitive verb: <i>seemed to get</i> 2. Past perfect: <i>had known</i> 3. Preposition: <i>for</i> 4. Determiner, singular form: <i>another</i>
	<b>Wrong terminology</b>	No instances
E X P L A N A T I O N S	<b>Complete</b>	1. <b>opened</b> – verb sequence of events. The action was performed at the same time “her eyes looked left.” 2. <b>were reflecting</b> – (1) wrong form of verb in Past continuous. (2) reflect is a state vb. Maybe it sounds better in past simple “reflected” 3. <b>puzzled</b> – past participle as in passive voice used as adjective 4. <b>never said</b> – (routine in the past or choose Present Perfect to connect with following paragraph)
	<b>No or incomplete explanations</b>	1. Felt his deep eyes on her, April shyly <u>was introduced</u> herself E: <b>introduced</b> – Active Voice 2. they talked about their own lives, painful past and <u>hopefully</u> futures E: <b>hopeful</b> – syntax: an adjective is needed here 3. The train departed and outside the snow <u>had continued</u> to fall E: <b>continued</b> – simple past 4. He <u>did not say</u> NO ... E: He <b>never says</b>
	<b>Wrong explanation</b>	1. They were about to arrive in Rome where April was <u>supposing</u> to stop E: <b>supposed</b> – Passive voice R: <b>supposed</b> – past participle – this forms part of the semi-modal (or quasi-modal) ‘be supposed to’ which is used to express obligation or necessity - The past participle ‘supposed’ should have been used instead of the present participle ‘supposing’

# APPENDIX 4: Sample of thematic analysis and codification

(Emma, SR7, E1)

Interview Data	Theme	Code / Comment / Insight
<p>I: What is the rationale for the rule you've given the students?</p> <p>E: (she reads the second question) how accurate? Well, I don't know the concept ... but I remember understanding like a kind of rule that when you accomplish a number of things and again, as it is not our use ... I learned it through rules and then I confirmed it through use and then I confirmed it a third time or more times through the textbook or through a grammar exercise book for students of English as a foreign language. I don't know if the student of English as their native language has this rule for the use of one tense, I don't know. But I remember, for example, as a student not knowing the difference, then checking that a book said something like 'accomplishment' or 'results' and then understanding that most of the examples with number like writing books or going somewhere visiting a place many more times, a lot of times, two times, meant present perfect, that I internalised it as that. And then I tried to make it short for the students to ... if not to get a rule, to survive a choice, to survive an (unintelligible). For example, we learn that we cannot use the present perfect with the ... with a fixed expression of time. You wouldn't use it to show a fixed moment when you did something. For that you would use the past simple. But then ... I think that sometimes people speak, especially in America, for example, American English, they probably would say 'I've seen him yesterday' ... that wouldn't be a big mistake. Well but I have to ... make my students learn probably more accurate rules than native speakers because the exercises would be based on that, on recognising one or the other. Simplest rule? OK, maybe I take the this explanation of numbers. Probably it's like those those formulas that we learn for mathematics that have nothing to do with the concept in itself, but you remember some ... names, again mnemonics.</p> <p>I: Yeah, OK. Yeah. Here you were using just the word 'number', you were not talking about accomplishing things.</p> <p>E: No, especially .. no because I was thinking about something visual when they see 'a' number.</p> <p>I: Because at that moment I thought: well, what about if you say 'I've been working on three books lately'? You have a number</p> <p>E: Exactly, you have a number. But I've been ... I mean, yes, accomplishment and number, 'I've written three books'.</p> <p>I: That is accomplishment. But you were not mentioning accomplishment here.</p>	<p>KAG PLLEs</p> <p>PLLEs</p> <p>GRPK</p> <p>KAG</p> <p>GRPK</p> <p>GRPK</p>	<p>Sources of KAG: not L1 bec. this tense is not used in her L1, learned through rules, then through use, then through TB or gr. ex. book for EFL sts</p> <p>Recalls what she did when she didn't understand the diff. bet. PPS &amp; PPC: checked a book and analysed eggs.</p> <p>Tendency to simplify concepts &amp; rules: to help sts survive (in communication?)</p> <p>Inaccurate statement and e.g. PP is not much used in AmE</p> <p>Claims that what she teaches may differ from the use native speakers may make of English</p> <p>Simplification: compares ELT with maths (teaching formulas)</p> <p>Uses 'number' instead of 'accomplishment' to create a memorable visual image of rule</p>

<p>E: No, no.  I: You mentioned accomplishment later on.  E: Yes, probably. But I wasn't thinking about an example of that (unintelligible).  I: So the idea of mentioning number and not using, for example, accomplishment was at the beginning to make it visual to the learners ...?  E: Yeah, maybe then it's a bit more ...it's deeper, the explanation should be deeper or ... the concept is deeper than just numbers, yeah.  I: Because then you made it more ... sophisticated saying 'number of things you accomplished'. So you start with something simple and then you move on and you make it more complex?  E: Yeah, but I'm not aware of that.  I: You're not aware of that. It's something that you do naturally. OK, what do you mean by 'va a ser va a ser mi regla .. mi regla entre alumnos, no es una regla que el profesor les diga pero ...' and then you continue.  E: Yeah, again, it's not a rule that you are going to find in a textbook: it's numbers, but it's between them and me. Remember that when there is a number, I should've said 'a number of things that have been accomplished', but when there are numbers in the sentence you can pay attention to that. I don't know, I believe in some of these tips that a teacher can tell the students, especially those students that cannot grasp ... the concept, the notion of accomplishment, for example.  I: And what do you think is the risk sometimes of telling the students 'number' and then they say 'oh, well, this is present perfect continuous and there's a number'.  E: Well, exactly that, that nothing is so fixed and that you can have, as you said, one expression when you can use one tense one grammar point .. with number.  I: And this idea of saying it's a rule between you and me it's like trying to create some sort of confidentiality/complicity between them and you?  E: Yeah, something like 'don't say it, don't say, I mean, be careful, this is not something that you are going to find in textbooks but it ca help you'.  I: It's a tool I'm giving you.  E: It's a tool that I'm giving you ... don't reproduce it as such because it might be ... you might make a mistake er ... but sometimes they do. Erm ... I'm thinking about the party, not the students that have already grasped the ... the rule, the notion of accomplishment, but those students that are still a bit ... weak. I don't know, maybe (name of student) or (name of student).</p>	<p>GRPK  <i>When provided with an e.g. that proves her rule incomplete, she recognises she had over-simplified the rule</i></p> <p>GRPK  <i>Rules: 1<sup>st</sup> gives very simple rules and then makes it more sophisticated (not aware of that)</i></p> <p>GRPK  <i>Rule she provides: HER rule, not found in a TB, a tip given by T to those sts who cannot grasp concept or notion</i></p> <p><i>Acknowledges what should be a full version of rule</i></p> <p><i>Is she justifying her rule?</i></p> <p>GRPK  <i>Simplified rule: creates complicity bet. T and sts, it's sth they should keep confidential (why? Because she knows it is not altogether right?)</i></p> <p><i>Acknowledges her rule might lead sts to make a mistake</i></p> <p><i>Tendency to simplify might be caused by her concern for weaker sts</i></p>
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## APPENDIX 5: Emma's engagement with grammar teaching

Category	Salient Features	Rationale & characteristics
<b>ELT at Cortázar School</b>	Grammar-based classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>unsatisfactory results with content based approach</li> <li>learners' request for grammar &amp; vocabulary instruction</li> <li>freedom to design own syllabus</li> <li>selection of textbook with strong grammatical component</li> </ul>
	Grammar-based teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>at sentence level; incidental &amp; not systematic treatment at discourse level</li> <li>provides 'accountability'</li> </ul>
	Grammar-based tests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>easy for teachers to agree on contents &amp; correction criteria; grammar is 'quantifiable'</li> <li>used in different classes with the same level</li> </ul>
	Emma's perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>likes &amp; favours grammar teaching</li> <li>Cortázar teachers focus too much on grammar</li> <li>in her class, intended to assist 'weakest' sts ('accountability')</li> </ul>
<b>Teacher style &amp; beliefs</b>	Tendency to control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to help sts seize opportunities to practise &amp; use L2</li> <li>to ensure tasks are completed (time restrictions)</li> <li>to ensure planned actions and tasks have expected affective impact</li> <li>to ensure understanding &amp; good performance in tests; to gain sts' affection &amp; recognition</li> <li>she fears unexpected complex qts. and comments during incidental grammar teaching; claims to be aware of her limits</li> <li>confident about her KAG at school level &amp; comfortable teaching grammar → grammar instruction: allows her to be in control &amp; gives her teaching face validity in the eyes of sts.</li> </ul>
	Secondary school language teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>should be concise, summarise &amp; select most relevant content (related to her simplification of rules &amp; content, KAG &amp; GRPK)</li> <li>should make sts play with language</li> <li>should keep authority</li> <li>self-perception: able to provide clear explanations, shortest rule possible, sufficient practice</li> </ul>
	Interest in clarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>content &amp; objectives made explicit</li> <li>derives from negative PLLEs at university</li> <li>lack of clear objectives can frustrate sts.</li> <li>she becomes too repetitive</li> </ul>
	Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>recycles old techniques</li> <li>adapts traditional techniques to meet her teaching goals; integrates them in class in an informed way</li> <li>ready to let experience shape her teaching</li> <li>on-going reflection</li> </ul>
<b>Experience</b>	Positive impact on teaching practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>selects content on the basis of sts' ability to handle them</li> <li>has developed anticipation skills</li> <li>is ready to transfer experience from one context to another</li> </ul>

	Negative impact on teaching practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>relies too much on experience &amp; does not plan classes meticulously</li> <li>takes misleading actions which are informed by her experience &amp; not by the materials she is using</li> </ul>
<b>Class plans</b>	Reasons for not planning classes in detail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>disappointed in the past when classes did not turn out as planned</li> <li>going to class relatively unprepared is less boring &amp; challenging</li> <li>allows her to be spontaneous</li> <li>thinks she can teach a good class all the same</li> <li>sometimes feels lazy to plan classes</li> </ul>
	Planning classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>meticulously only when getting acquainted with new book</li> <li>when using book again, she plans what to teach but not how</li> </ul>
	Impact on observed teaching practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provided inaccurate, misleading instructions (once)</li> <li>gave confusing feedback (twice)</li> <li>took unnecessary actions (once)</li> </ul>
<b>Selection of content</b>	Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>main content: agreed by all teachers, selected from textbook</li> <li>teachers are free to focus on some items more than on others and to add more content</li> </ul>
	Emma's own criteria based on ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>own confidence with new content</li> <li>whether treatment in book matches her own teaching goals</li> <li>whether other colleagues select the same items</li> <li>sts' needs &amp; capacity (related to simplification of content and rules, KAG &amp; GRPK)</li> <li>whether items are potentially useful (active language prioritised over passive language)</li> <li>whether they are included in textbook practice and tests</li> </ul>
<b>Explicit grammar teaching</b>	Reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clearer &amp; more focused than communicative presentations; sts make an informed use of language</li> <li>suggested by current textbook: materials &amp; approach adhere to same pedagogical principles</li> <li>sts understand rules more easily; time-saving, appropriate for context with time constraints</li> <li>more 'accountable'</li> </ul>
<b>Grammar presentations</b>	Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explicit, deductive, teacher-centred</li> <li>academic, not communicative; similar to those in other subjects</li> </ul>
	Structure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>focusing</i>: introduces new item</li> <li><i>naming</i>: provides name of new item</li> <li><i>forms</i>: outlines different forms (+, -, ?)</li> <li><i>uses</i>: describes how new item is used</li> <li><i>L1 discussion</i>: explains in L1; compares L1 &amp; L2</li> </ol>
<b>Inductive grammar teaching</b>	Belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>her sts have a good level so they are prepared for inductive learning</li> </ul>
	Frequency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>rarely engages in inductive grammar teaching (two attempts in 10 classes)</li> </ul>
<b>Incidental grammar</b>	Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>rarely engages in incidental grammar teaching (possibly because of unwillingness to lose control)</li> </ul>

<b>teaching</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>or because of time constraints)</li> <li>• decision based on her perception of sts' needs</li> <li>• treatment: stresses item, explains meaning or translates it, exemplifies it, makes it memorable by repeating it throughout semester, never included in tests</li> </ul>
<b>Practice</b>	Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mainly book-based</li> <li>• controlled practice</li> <li>• test-oriented</li> <li>• recycled old techniques</li> </ul>
	Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sts prefer controlled practice</li> <li>• free practice is time-consuming</li> <li>• homework used to compensate missing classes</li> <li>• drills expose sts to language in short period of time; provides speaking practice; help sts understand, memorise, internalise new items</li> <li>• simplification of practice based on sts' preferences, test preparation, time constraints &amp; tendency to control learning process</li> </ul>
<b>Integration of grammar into skills work</b>	Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• oral practice guided by prompts</li> <li>• guidance provided in relation to syntax and use of tenses</li> </ul>
	Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• items required in sts' writings</li> <li>• some structures suggested by teacher</li> <li>• focus on syntax, tenses, adjectives, articles</li> <li>• interest in fostering grammatical accuracy (ongoing guidance, constant feedback on mistakes, whole-class error treatment)</li> <li>• tendency to control sts' production</li> </ul>
	Reading & listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no evidence of integration</li> </ul>
<b>Textbook materials</b>	Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• student's book &amp; language powerbook</li> <li>• strong grammar load</li> <li>• grammar mainly at the sentence level</li> <li>• explicit grammar teaching</li> <li>• development of grammatical terminology encouraged</li> <li>• grammar items recycled</li> </ul>
	Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• relatively strict adherence to textbook</li> </ul>
<b>Tests</b>	Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• book-based</li> <li>• mostly grammar-oriented</li> </ul>
	Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sts get familiar &amp; prepared for test through classwork</li> <li>• sts are tested on 'tangible' items they are aware of and can study</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 6: Emma's PLLEs

Category	Salient Features	Rationale & characteristics
<b>Private classes (age 6-10)</b>	Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>entirely book-based</li> <li>memorisation of long lists of words, mechanical repetition</li> <li>largely grammar-centred: structural; focus on discrete items, tenses, and syntax</li> <li>main grammar task: filling in gapped statements</li> <li>found it difficult to learn items with no clear rules or with too many exceptions</li> <li>compares learning grammar with studying mathematical rules</li> </ul>
	Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>felt disappointed: learning grammar did not help her to develop speaking or writing skills; this shaped her current view of language learning: teaching grammar does not turn sts into good language users</li> <li>teaching grammar gives 'weaker' sts 'tangible' items to study and a 'structured context to function'</li> </ul>
<b>Secondary school (age 13-17)</b>	Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>structural approach with grammar playing a central role</li> <li>deductive grammar teaching: having said the rule &amp; done the exercises meant that grammar content had been learnt; 'accountability'</li> <li>tasks: gap-filling, transformations, memorisation of verbs and rules, drillings</li> <li>written &amp; grammar-based tests</li> <li>memories of one teacher: did not treat 'weak' sts well; grammar teaching helped 'weak' sts to understand grammar and pass tests</li> </ul>
	Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>frustrated because unable to speak or write fluently: reinforced her view of grammar making no contribution to becoming good language users</li> <li>developed concern for 'weaker' sts: many of her actions &amp; techniques are meant to assist these sts (e.g., simplification of content, overuse of repetition – see GRPK) &amp; to help them experience sense of achievement</li> </ul>
	Preferences / Learning style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fond memories of structural approach: good at learning grammar &amp; doing mechanical work</li> <li>loved structures with logical rules</li> <li>sorted out grammar problems using mathematical logic</li> </ul>
<b>Teacher training course</b>	Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>memories of all types of teachers; comfortable with those that made their subjects 'accountable' and with clear objectives</li> <li>language classes: vague</li> <li>grammar classes: structural grammar with focus on syntax analysis and discrete grammar items; syntax analysis helped improve her understanding of complex items and performance</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• methodology classes: textbook guides teaching, give short explanations, provide relevant practice, avoid using Spanish; no instruction on how to teach grammar</li> <li>• English &amp; Portuguese classes: exposed to behaviourist techniques, effective to develop oral skills</li> </ul>
	Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dislikes vagueness, makes content &amp; objectives explicit</li> <li>• her current classes: book-based, short explanations, controlled practice, use of Spanish (repeats model in her PLLEs)</li> <li>• recycles behaviourist techniques</li> </ul>
<b>Post teacher training course</b>	Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• focus on communication, role of grammar teaching redefined (minimised/neglected, to serve a communicative purpose)</li> <li>• eventually realised sts needed grammar to take more informed decisions about language use</li> </ul>
	Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• grammar sometimes integrated in classes to serve a communicative purpose (e.g., writing)</li> </ul>



## APPENDIX 7: Emma's KAG

Category	Salient Features	Rationale & characteristics
<b>Manifestations of KAG</b>	Explicit KAG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>most manifestations related to her explicit KAG</li> <li>evident in explanations, exemplifications, &amp; definitions</li> <li>most manifestations comprise verb patterns</li> <li>GJT: (54.5% of correct explanations); most manifestations have to do with tenses &amp; verb patterns</li> </ul>
	Implicit KAG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>only 2 instances in classes: 1- use of present simple &amp; past simple (unable to verbalise rules either in class or in SR), 2- grammaticality of 'he has been being aggressive all his life' (recognises inaccuracy, bounces question back to st., gives two reasons but no explanations &amp; sounds speculative, not sure about rule)</li> <li>GJT: 1- possibly the cases where she corrected mistake but provided no or incomplete explanations (43.6% of the cases); other factors might be involved: inclination to be concise, personal &amp; situational restrictions; 2- case where she provided accurate explanation but included question marks (possibly lack of confidence in KAG or doubt about specific terminology)</li> </ul>
<b>Fuzzy areas in Emma's KAG</b>	Observations & SR sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>few peculiarities (4 cases)</li> <li>feedback on use of PPC: possibly because of tendency to simplify content</li> <li>inaccurate instructions &amp; explanation about uses of PPC &amp; PPS: possibly caused by 1- distraction when writing exercise, 2- uncritical reading of information in materials &amp; tendency to simplify concepts, 3- lack of confidence in KAG during impromptu grammar work</li> <li>feedback on distinction between PPC &amp; PPS: possibly deviation in KAG (accepts inaccurate answer as correct in class &amp; SR, questions own correct answer, provides confusing explanation during SR)</li> <li>explanation about two uses of 'would' (second conditional &amp; future in past): confused in class &amp; SR, possibly deviation in KAG</li> </ul>
	GJT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>possible evidence in mistakes not identified, mistakes identified but not corrected, unnecessary corrections, wrong corrections, &amp; wrong explanations provided</li> <li>not necessarily limitation in KAG, probably caused by other factors (e.g., number of mistakes in passages, ambiguities, personal circumstances)</li> </ul>
<b>Confidence</b>	Manifestations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>she feels confident at intermediate level at</li> </ul>

<b>in KAG</b>	of confidence in KAG	<p>school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>evident in predisposition to filter input from textbook: claims she treats book critically, has found mistakes, and uses techniques to filter complex content (no instances in classes observed)</li> <li>manifest in her filtering input received from other sts (accurate corrections of and comments on sts' oral mistakes &amp; contributions)</li> <li>first impression of Emma: a teacher with easy confidence in her KAG: provides immediate responses to sts' questions, includes relevant egs. &amp; L1-L2 comparisons in explanations, filters sts' output &amp; makes spontaneous comments about that</li> </ul>
	Manifestations of lack of confidence in KAG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lost some confidence when proved herself wrong on many occasions</li> <li>recurrent use of epistemic stance adverbials of doubt (e.g., 'probably', 'maybe') &amp; hedging expressions (e.g., '90%', 'sometimes') in class &amp; SR interviews</li> <li>reliance on textbook &amp; inclination to repeat rules to play safe</li> <li>occasional use of strategies to protect herself</li> <li>fear for losing control &amp; not being able to respond sts' questions during impromptu grammar work</li> </ul>
<b>Grammatical terminology</b>	Manifestations of knowledge of grammar terms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>used adequate grammatical labels when explaining content in class, when providing rationale for her actions in SR, &amp; when naming &amp; explaining mistakes in GJT</li> </ul>
	Omission to use specific grammatical terminology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>omission in class possibly associated with her inclination to reduce complexity of content to sts</li> <li>not using any grammar terms at all in explanations</li> <li>using generic/umbrella terms</li> <li>using correct labels but then simplifying them into misleading terms</li> <li>using wrong terms</li> <li>not naming mistakes in 44.26% of the corrections she made in GJT (other factors may have influenced this)</li> </ul>
<b>Sources of KAG</b>	Formal language learning experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PLLEs</li> <li>KAG built mostly from teaching experience, mainly through working with textbooks</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 8: Emma's GRPK

Category	Salient Features	Rationale & characteristics
Nature of explanations	Sources of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>current textbook materials &amp; grammar books</li> <li>previous teaching experience</li> <li>effective explanations in her PLLEs</li> </ul>
	Spontaneity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mainly because she plans what to teach but not how</li> </ul>
	Conciseness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>preference for short explanations</li> <li>time constraints imposed by school context</li> <li>belief that intermediate secondary school sts might not be able to cope with complex &amp; detailed explanations</li> <li>intention to keep sts' attention and their interest high</li> </ul>
	Based on whom they are directed to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>belief: the more advanced and more exposed to L2 sts are, the more comprehensive explanations can be (not her case at school)</li> </ul>
	Simplicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>graded from simple to complex</li> <li>simple concepts: no more than 1 or 2 concepts at a time (e.g., tense uses)</li> <li>little or no grammatical terminology</li> </ul>
	Confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>manifestations of confidence: provides immediate responses to sts' questions &amp; comments, explains all grammatical points included in syllabus, always illustrates discussions with examples</li> <li>manifestations of lack of confidence: frequent use of epistemic stance adverbials &amp; hedging expressions</li> </ul>
	Use of negative statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>creates greater impact on sts &amp; helps them memorise rules</li> </ul>
Techniques	Exemplification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to convey meaning of new items &amp; to show how they are used</li> <li>some grammar content cannot be explained theoretically but only through examples</li> <li>creates egs. first about her, then about the sts (as a touch of humour), &amp; finally invites sts to contribute with their own egs.</li> <li>creating egs. is not easy for NNS teachers, yet she made frequent &amp; effective use of egs.</li> </ul>
	Use of L1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>explaining in L1: extensive use (monolingual class), time-saving (time constraints), to ensure all sts (esp. 'weaker' ones) can follow her explanations, to check understanding &amp; that sts have paid attention, restricted to complex content, not always safe (sees limitations of technique &amp; makes informed use of it)</li> <li>comparing L1-L2: to grasp the essence of content, only when comparison is possible &amp; effective</li> </ul>

	Repetition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• typical of her style, usually accompanied by gestures</li> <li>• to make new item noticed</li> <li>• to help sts understand &amp; fix new content</li> <li>• to help sts follow her explanations</li> <li>• to invite sts to complete gapped statements</li> <li>• to elicit grammatical terms &amp; structures sts already know</li> <li>• to encourage sts to translate</li> <li>• as a touch of humour</li> </ul>
	Metaphors, analogies, and images	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to help sts understand &amp; memorise a concept by creating a mental image of it</li> <li>• when little time to internalise new concept</li> <li>• to turn abstract concepts into tangible images</li> </ul>
	Mnemonics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to aid sts' memory</li> <li>• to foster development of grammar terms</li> </ul>
	Humour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• frequent use</li> <li>• in combination with other techniques</li> </ul>
	Visual and linguistic support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• visual: drew charts to accompany explanations</li> <li>• linguistic: provided linguistic prompts to help sts realise what tense to use in exercises</li> </ul>
	Creating a context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mainly through examples</li> <li>• invites sts to explain context in examples</li> <li>• technique used mostly to check understanding &amp; avoid confusion between structures &amp; uses</li> </ul>
	Grading level of complexity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• content graded from simple to complex: introduces 1-2 items at a time &amp; omits too much specific terminology</li> <li>• claims secondary school sts are able &amp; willing to handle limited amount of information at a time</li> </ul>
	Error correction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• correcting mistakes &amp; giving feedback to individual sts</li> <li>• whole-class treatment of recurrent &amp; shared mistakes</li> </ul>
<b>Simplification of content and terminology</b>	Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• deals with few items at a time</li> <li>• reduces conceptual complexity</li> <li>• filters sts' contributions when eliciting info</li> <li>• omits specific grammatical terminology</li> </ul>
	Reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to provide sts with an amount of information they are able &amp; willing to handle</li> <li>• to cover all contents in syllabus (time constraints)</li> <li>• to keep focus (e.g., speaking, not grammar) &amp; to avoid going off-topic when introducing a particular content</li> <li>• to help sts, esp. 'weaker' ones, to understand &amp; remember new items more quickly</li> <li>• to prepare sts for textbook practice &amp; tests ('accountability')</li> <li>• to make explanations more realistic/tangible</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 9: CFs and their impact on Emma's practices

Category	Salient Features	Rationale & characteristics
<b>Type of institution: State secondary school</b>	Time constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• one of the most influential factors</li> <li>• sts miss classes because of institutional activities, strikes, teacher absenteeism, &amp; public holidays</li> <li>• general impact: no continuity between classes, teaching plans re-scheduled, working against the clock to cover main contents in syllabus</li> <li>• impact on grammar teaching approach: mostly deductive, explicit, little room for impromptu grammar work</li> <li>• impact on selection of tasks &amp; content: book-based &amp; test-oriented, controlled (easy to check, time-saving), effective in helping sts to fix content quickly &amp; to expose them to L2 in short period of time (e.g., drills)</li> <li>• impact on teaching decisions &amp; techniques: short explanations, feedback, &amp; comments; simplification of content &amp; terminology; focus on techniques which help sts to grasp &amp; memorise items quickly; homework used to compensate for classes missed; difficult to attend individual problems, use motivating strategies, or engage in spontaneous discussions</li> </ul>
	Institutional issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EFL teaching limited by school context: most sts attend classes not of their own free will but because these are part of curriculum; sts are expected to comply with strict school requirements; she trains sts to be good sts, not necessarily to be good language users</li> <li>• classes inconveniently scheduled (early afternoon): sts are often tired, talkative, &amp; easily distracted → impact on classroom dynamics (many short activities to cope with short attention span &amp; tiredness → often lack of unity/cohesion among tasks)</li> </ul>
	Linguistic limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• school setting shaping nature of language taught: active language prioritised, content treated more superficially</li> </ul>
	Methodological issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• presentations similar to those in other school subjects: explicit &amp; teacher-fronted</li> </ul>
<b>Textbook materials</b>	Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shape such aspects as selection, nature, and organisation of content and tasks; integration of linguistic items with skills work; development of grammatical terminology; and type of input sts are exposed to</li> </ul>
<b>Students and other teachers</b>	Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• impact on nature of presentations, feedback, &amp; comments (short); type of practice (controlled); cohesion among activities (lack</li> </ul>

		of unity)
	Other teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• impact on selection of contents for syllabus &amp; tests</li> </ul>
<b>Teacher herself</b>	Teaching the same level in previous class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• helps her to anticipate problems &amp; to be better prepared for explanations</li> <li>• she mixes memories between groups → forgets to attend individual problems or to check special homework</li> </ul>
	Personal circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• lack of time &amp; tiredness → not doing research on doubts which arise in class, not planning classes meticulously</li> </ul>
	Cognition & personality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PLLEs, KAG, GRPK, etc.</li> <li>• Tendency to control, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Research project</b>	Nature and impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reflective activity in SR prompted teacher to take some specific actions</li> <li>• naturally occurring classroom events possibly influenced by reflective nature of SR &amp; by researcher's presence in the classroom</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 10: Sophia's engagement with grammar teaching

Category	Salient Features	Rationale & characteristics
<b>Teacher style &amp; beliefs</b>	FL teaching approach: communication-oriented and meaning-focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>emphasis on development of oral skills</li> <li>Sophia's major strength: ability to interact with sts and make them speak</li> <li>creates opportunities for meaningful communication</li> <li>lexical &amp; grammar items taught as chunks; meaning &amp; use emphasised; occasional analysis of discrete items (grammar a delicate subject for Sophia)</li> </ul>
	Approach to language learning: immersion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ideal: rich &amp; broad exposure to L2; permanent &amp; intensive contact with L2</li> <li>reality: time restrictions &amp; lack of resources. Teachers should create classroom conditions which promote authentic use of L2</li> </ul>
<b>Grammar teaching</b>	Rationale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reason 1 - impact on sts' understanding of L1 &amp; development of language awareness in general: context-defined (no instruction on L1 grammar at school), sts develop ability to transfer info from one language to the other</li> <li>Reason 2 - development of 'noticing' skills and autonomous L2 learners</li> <li>Reason 3 - interesting &amp; valuable to Cortázar sts since they have good L1 background knowledge &amp; enjoy intellectual challenge</li> <li>Reason 4 - grammar discussions represent instances of meaningful communication</li> <li>Impact only on sts' language awareness &amp; not on their L2 production</li> </ul>
	Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>has to respond to pre-established work methodology where grammar is included in syllabus, tests, &amp; classes. Yet enjoys some freedom because of teaching last level</li> <li>grammar teaching gives classes face validity in the eyes of sts, who see grammar &amp; vocabulary as <i>the</i> teaching part of L2 lessons</li> </ul>
	Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>more general than analytic; focus on chunks than on discrete items</li> <li>avoids/defers grammar explanations &amp; analysis of discrete language points</li> <li>possible adherence to principles of lexical approach to language teaching, though approach may also be determined by other factors (e.g., lack of confidence in her KAG)</li> </ul>
<b>Content &amp; context</b>	Selection of content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>textbook-based</li> <li>agreed by all teachers of EFL department</li> <li>no pressure from institution on nature &amp; volume of content; institutional syllabus design</li> <li>each teacher free to include additional content (not observed in Sophia's classes)</li> </ul>

	Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• content always contextualised</li> <li>• usually context proposed by textbook; ready to create context herself (not observed in classes)</li> <li>• context highlights use of grammar items being presented</li> <li>• Sophia's criticism: texts do not look genuine (too many samples in short piece of text) (not observed to adapt or replace texts)</li> <li>• context used by teacher sometimes restricts sts' view of nature of language in certain discourse types (not observed to add more contexts)</li> </ul>
	Teaching of register as a content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• occasional &amp; only in relation to oral discourse</li> <li>• language treated in chunks &amp; not at a grammatical level; meaning-oriented; approach adopted by textbook, not sure about its effectiveness</li> </ul>
<b>Presentations</b>	Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explicit</li> <li>• inductive: use of techniques that promote discovery learning; always teacher-guided</li> <li>• unable to use more st-centred techniques because of time constraints</li> </ul>
	Structure: stages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• context (1): textbook-based, exposure to new item in relevant discourse</li> <li>• focus + name: not always present; supports development of grammatical terminology in intermediate sts to facilitate communication about language (not consistent in her classes; use of generic &amp; sometimes misleading terms)</li> <li>• previous knowledge: to build on what sts know, to provide meaningful &amp; tailor-made presentations, to promote meaningful communication in the classroom</li> <li>• meaning &amp; use: to discover meaning/use using egs. from context</li> <li>• L1-L2 comparison: only when sts might benefit from comparison; importance given to sts' contributions to learning process; focus on development of language awareness</li> <li>• context (2): to identify egs. in relevant context</li> <li>• form: to analyse egs. &amp; discover rules; treatment divided into stages if necessary (responsive to sts' needs)</li> <li>• round-up: completing charts/tables by eliciting info from sts; her own idea (not taken from textbook)</li> </ul>
	Structure: nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not fixed</li> <li>• stages always present: use of context, discussion of meaning/use, analysis of egs., focus on form, &amp; summarising</li> <li>• strengths: to show how new item operates in whole discourse, to discuss meaning/use, to round up</li> <li>• weakness: presentations too long, tiring, with too much info for sts to remember (yet values grammar-based lessons)</li> </ul>



<b>Grammar practice</b>	Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in-class and homework</li> <li>• recurrently controlled with closed ended answers</li> </ul>
	Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• used in presentations to make sts work on egs. and discover rules related to form</li> <li>• discussions in pairs/groups to increase understanding of new grammar item</li> <li>• more 'traditional' exercises to fix aspects related to form</li> <li>• to offer sts the opportunity to explore further features about new grammar item</li> </ul>
	Integration with skills work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• never integrated with receptive skills: not sure if sts can focus on listening &amp; grammar at the same time</li> <li>• sometimes integrated with speaking (when correcting oral contributions) and writing (when giving feedback on compositions)</li> </ul>
	Impact of time constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• little practice is provided</li> <li>• homework is assigned to compensate for lack of time: allows sts to get further egs. of new language item and to be in contact with L2 outside classroom</li> <li>• grammar integrated with skills if more time available</li> </ul>
<b>Error correction in oral contributions</b>	Nature of mistakes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• structures sts commonly use</li> <li>• mistakes that are meaningful/useful to correct mistakes which sts easily understand as such</li> <li>• mistakes that sound too bad and that are so different from "the native speaker norm" that they may turn the interlocutor off</li> <li>• mistakes which do not take long to correct and are easy to treat</li> </ul>
	Mistakes overlooked	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• when task has a heavy cognitive demand</li> <li>• when focus is on the content &amp; not on accuracy</li> <li>• when emphasis is on fluency</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 11: Sophia's PLLEs

Category	Salient Features	Rationale & characteristics
<b>Private classes (age 8-9)</b>	Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in a relaxed and non-institutional context</li> <li>• motivation to study L2: her mother's (keep in touch with family in Canada) &amp; her own (exchange letters with Canadian cousins)</li> <li>• unable to understand connected discourse in cousins' letters; teacher translated them</li> <li>• classes: no speaking or listening comprehension, bilingual vocabulary lists, written questions &amp; answers, repetition of exercises</li> <li>• teacher: instruction mostly in L1, taught classes sitting at a table</li> <li>• learned very little</li> </ul>
	Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Though Sophia thinks private classes have had no impact on current beliefs &amp; practices, they may have influenced them in terms of what she rejects</li> <li>• none of ELT aspects she values today were present in private classes</li> </ul>
<b>Secondary school in Canada (age 11-13)</b>	Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'New Canadians' class: immersion type of methodology, content-based instruction in L2, the students who succeeded were those taking more opportunities to be exposed to L2</li> <li>• regular classes: more demanding; failed English literature but passed other subjects; committed teachers; active class dynamics; French teacher: used direct method (lots of L2 input)</li> </ul>
	Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• manifest interest in immersion, exposure to L2, content/skills-based teaching</li> <li>• appreciates teachers' commitment (one of Sophia's strengths nowadays)</li> </ul>
<b>Secondary school in Argentina (age 13-17)</b>	Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 years of EFL, 2 years of French</li> <li>• good teachers: fluent command of L2, good class dynamics, active personality</li> </ul>
	Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sophia's current strengths: same aspects she valued from secondary school teachers</li> </ul>
<b>Teacher training course</b>	Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• language classes: got low marks since she was not methodical &amp; had not developed 'formal' lang. learning strategies to cope with these classes</li> <li>• English grammar classes: prescriptive centred on study of rules, Sophia did not trust books used (artificial lang.) → conflict between grammar teaching methodology &amp; her pre-existing language learning beliefs; study of discrete items &amp; syntax analysis; not familiar with grammar terminology; classes did not contribute to her development as EFL teacher &amp; as language user (e.g., knowledge of grammar terminology)</li> <li>• Spanish grammar classes: focused on discourse, more interesting</li> <li>• methodology classes: lived transition towards communicative approach (focus on functions,</li> </ul>

		context & meaning; uncertainty about grammar teaching)
	Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• major impact from grammar &amp; methodology classes</li> <li>• tendency to avoid &amp; defer grammar-related discussions; preference for discourse-based grammar instruction instead of study of discrete grammar items</li> <li>• focus on functions, context &amp; meaning; grammar treated occasionally &amp; peripherally</li> <li>• reconsidering role of grammar teaching</li> </ul>
<b>First teaching practices</b>	Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• boom of communicative approach: functions focused; grammar neglected</li> <li>• required to teach grammar at a language school (textbook used fostered grammar teaching, esp. advanced levels)</li> <li>• developed experiential KAG &amp; GRPK</li> </ul>
	Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reinforced communicative, meaning-oriented and non-language-focused EFL methodology</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 12: Sophia's KAG

Category	Salient Features	Rationale & characteristics
<b>Manifestations of KAG</b>	Explicit KAG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>evident in elicitations, explanations, exemplifications, &amp; definitions</li> <li>manifestations at and above sentence level</li> <li>GJT: 44.26% of correct explanations; knowledge of varied grammar items</li> </ul>
	Implicit KAG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>only 1 instance in classes: difference in use between 'for example' &amp; 'such as' (unable to verbalise rules either in class or in SR)</li> <li>GJT: 1- possibly the cases where she corrected mistake but provided no or incomplete explanations (47.54% of the cases); other factors might be involved: forgot to explain or personal &amp; situational restrictions; 2- possibly the cases where she corrected mistake but provided wrong explanations (other factors might be involved as well)</li> </ul>
<b>Fuzzy areas in Sophia's KAG</b>	Observations & SR sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>few peculiarities about her KAG (4 instances)</li> <li>created mistake (fragment) when typing text from workbook &amp; didn't spot it later on: evidence of Sophia's meaning-oriented approach to text, heavy reliance on textbooks and blind acceptance of whatever input they provide, and lack of confidence in KAG</li> <li>accepted inaccurate answer as correct ('But') / cannot tell grammar difference between 'But' and 'However': focus on meaning rather than grammar use, lack of confidence in KAG</li> <li>introduced direct &amp; indirect speech as two forms of reported speech</li> <li>conveyed inaccurate conception about nature of indirect object (IO expressed by object pronoun but not by <i>to</i> + object pronoun)</li> </ul>
	GJT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>possible evidence in mistakes not identified, unnecessary corrections, wrong corrections, &amp; wrong explanations provided</li> <li>not necessarily limitation in KAG, possibly caused by other factors (e.g., number of mistakes in passages, ambiguities, personal circumstances)</li> </ul>
<b>Grammatical terminology</b>	Manifestations of knowledge of grammar terms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mostly in GJT when naming mistakes &amp; sometimes when explaining them</li> <li>sometimes in class when explaining, discussing or eliciting grammar items</li> <li>very sporadically during SR when providing rationale for her actions &amp; when defining grammar items</li> </ul>
	Omission to use specific grammatical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>not using any grammar terms at all in explanations or discussions</li> <li>using correct labels but then simplifying them</li> </ul>

	terminology	<p>into misleading terms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• using wrong terms</li> <li>• using generic terms</li> <li>• not naming mistakes in 30.8% of the corrections she made in GJT (other factors may have influenced this)</li> </ul>
<b>Lack of confidence in KAG</b>	Heavy reliance on textbook materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• does not filter language input; expects textbooks to be flawless, trusts them blindly</li> <li>• sticks to grammatical terminology in textbooks, though sometimes she thinks of other grammar labels</li> </ul>
	Other occasions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• grammar is not her element &amp; always represents a challenge in classes</li> <li>• does not feel confident about comparing structures in L1 &amp; L2</li> <li>• feels doubtful when I ask her grammar questions</li> </ul>
	Corrections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• thinks she is supposed to give learners definite answers &amp; manifests inability or unwillingness to do so</li> <li>• concerned she might end up correcting some language which is perfectly appropriate in spoken discourse</li> <li>• aspects above closely related to PLLEs in grammar classes at university: image of prescriptive teacher providing either-or responses &amp; dichotomy between language fostered in classroom &amp; that used in real life</li> </ul>

# APPENDIX 13: Sophia's GRPK

Category	Salient Features	Rationale & characteristics
Explanations	Relevance in Sophia's classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>avoided or deferred whenever possible</li> <li>more st-centred &amp; communication-oriented approaches adopted</li> </ul>
	First episode	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>situation: sts keep on saying 'I'm not agree'</li> <li>first decision: not to explain</li> <li>rationale for not explaining: prefers treating language as chunks &amp; not discrete grammar items; thinks grammar explanation would have no impact on sts' production; to give sts a break from grammar &amp; an opportunity to approach language from meaning-oriented perspective; to simplify learning process to sts; prefers an approach that promotes meaningful communication &amp; maximises exposure to language</li> <li>second decision: to give short explanation focusing on possible negative transfer from Spanish</li> </ul>
	Second episode	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>situation: sts are completing open cloze &amp; cannot tell distinction between linking words expressing contrast</li> <li>decision: to provide partial or no explanation of linking words</li> <li>rationale: a more comprehensive explanation would be time-consuming &amp; not useful to sts; not sure how much information to include in grammar explanations</li> </ul>
	Third episode	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>situation: a st thought that 'was going to stop' was an instance of past continuous</li> <li>decision: first, provided name of tense; second, described the form in each tense; third, gave examples &amp; elicited name of tenses (st got more confused: past continuous of 'going to'); finally, ended explanation repeating correct name of tense (st still confused)</li> <li>opinion: explanation not appropriate for this particular st; alternative approach: make a break, provide more examples, elicit more information, analyse form &amp; use in detail</li> <li>rationale for explanation given: didn't want to embarrass st, who is shy &amp; weaker than other sts (knowledge of individual st); didn't want other sts to get distracted (sense of whole class); little time to cover topic (knowledge of time constraints)</li> </ul>
Techniques	Elicitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>most widely used teaching technique</li> <li>to guide sts in the process of discovery learning &amp; thus enhance their understanding of content</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>other uses: to revise &amp; clarify content recently introduced, to help sts to make associations, to capture their attention, to activate their previous knowledge, to recycle items studied in previous lessons, to encourage sts to speak in class</li> </ul>
	Pair/group work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to construct the meaning of pieces of discourse &amp; new grammatical items</li> </ul>
	L1-L2 comparison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>used on rare occasions (two instances in classes observed)</li> <li>not used indiscriminately but when L1-L2 structures are parallel &amp; when sts might benefit from comparison</li> <li>using L1 knowledge to make sense of L2</li> <li>other uses: to give sts a break from L2, to make them focus on explanation, to stress the item, to call their attention</li> </ul>
	Visual support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>writes &amp; draws charts/tables on blackboard, &amp; highlights items in texts</li> <li>to offer a graphic representation of content</li> <li>to accompany explanations</li> <li>to assist sts in process of discovery learning</li> </ul>
	Conceptual grouping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to grasp meaning of new grammar items</li> <li>used in combination with elicitation</li> </ul>
	Summarising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>used at the end of presentations</li> <li>for sts to reach a better understanding of each &amp; every part of new grammar content</li> <li>integrated with elicitation &amp; visual support</li> </ul>
	Increasing exposure to L2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>arguably a technique to enhance sts' understanding of new grammar points</li> <li>to assist sts in constructing hypotheses about language</li> <li>in class sts exposed only to texts from textbook materials, possibly because of time constraints</li> </ul>

# APPENDIX 14: CFs and their impact on Sophia's practices

Category	Salient Features	Rationale & characteristics
Type of institution: State secondary school	Time constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the factor having the strongest &amp; widest impact on Sophia's teaching practices</li> <li>sts miss classes because of institutional reasons, student absenteeism, &amp; teacher absenteeism</li> <li>impact on selection of content: test-based selection made with other staff members; prioritises skills, grammar &amp; vocabulary; when few sts are present, Sophia focuses on aspects sts need practice in &amp; defers grammar presentations to classes with more sts</li> <li>impact on pedagogical decisions: provides limited exposure to L2 &amp; fewer opportunities for discovery learning; adopts focusing teaching techniques; gives book-based presentations; provides little practice; selects controlled exercises (quick to check); makes oral corrections which are time-saving (quick for her to make &amp; for sts to grasp)</li> </ul>
	Institutional considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>school context allows for L1 use → use of sts' L1 background knowledge &amp; L1-L2 comparisons in explanations &amp; discussions</li> <li>teachers expected to teach more than L2 → homework assigned &amp; required so that sts develop responsibility</li> <li>EFL classes perceived as having lower status than other subjects → sts often fail to complete homework</li> </ul>
Students	Profile & impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>have sound L1 knowledge &amp; enjoy intellectual challenge → use of L1-L2 comparison &amp; pair/group/teacher-led discussions</li> <li>are messy, disorganised &amp; easily distracted → quick explanations to individual sts; class plans changed; work on separate sheets of paper instead of textbook; use of teacher-fronted elicitation &amp; writing on board</li> </ul>
Textbook materials	Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>selection &amp; contextualisation of content</li> <li>grammar practice</li> <li>choice of grammatical terms</li> <li>teaching techniques adopted because of monotonous format</li> </ul>
Research project	Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>more awareness of class organisation &amp; materials content &amp; tasks</li> </ul>